Volume 49 Number 1 Spring 2008

screen

The Bette Davis dossier

Herzog, Bazin and the cinematic animal

Participation, reality TV and the audience-in-the text

Televisual stardom revisited after film theory

Peep Show, sitcom and the surveillance society

Screen Volume 49 Number 1 Spring 2008

OXFORD

Subscription & order information: Screen (ISSN 0036-9543) is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. Annual subscription price is £125/US$238/€188. A subscription to **Screen** comprises four issues. All prices include postage, and for subscribers outside the UK delivery is by Standard Air. Annual Subscription Rate (Volume 49, four issues, 2008): Institutional: (print and online) £125/US$238/€188 (print only) £119/US$226/€179 (online only) £119/US$226/€179. Personal: (print only) £48/US$91/€72. Please note: US$ rate applies to US and Rest of World, except UK (£) and Europe (Euros). There may be other subscription rates available, for a complete listing please visit www.screen.oxfordjournals.org/subscriptions.

The current year and two previous years' issues are available from Oxford University Press. Previous volumes can be obtained from the Periodicals Service Company, 11 Main Street, Germantown, NY 12526, USA. Email: psc@periodicals.com. Tel: +1 (518) 537 4700. Fax: +1 (518) 537 5899. Screen is distributed by Mercury International, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Rahway, NJ and at additional entry points. US POSTMASTER: send address changes to Screen, c/o Mercury International, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001, USA.

Full prepayment, in the correct currency, is required for all orders. Orders are regarded as firm and payments are not refundable. Subscriptions are accepted and entered on a complete volume basis. Claims cannot be considered more than FOUR months after publication or date of order, whichever is later. All subscriptions in Canada are subject to GST. Subscriptions in the EU may be subject to European VAT. If registered, please supply details to avoid unnecessary charges. Personal rate subscriptions are only available if payment is made by personal cheque or credit card and delivery is to a private address.

Methods of Payment. (i) Cheque (payable to Oxford University Press, to Oxford University Press, Cashiers Office, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK) in GB£ Sterling (drawn on a UK bank), US$ Dollars (drawn on a US bank), or EU€ Euros. (ii) Bank transfer to Barclays Bank Plc, Oxford Group Office, Oxford (bank sort code 20-65-18) (UK), overseas only Swift code BARC GB 22 (GB£ Sterling to account no. 70299332, IBAN GB89BARC20651870299332; US$ Dollars to account no. 66014600, IBAN GB27BARC20651866014600; EU€ Euros to account no. 78923655, IBAN GB16BARC20651878923655). (iii) Credit card (Mastercard, Visa, Switch or American Express). For further information, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. Email: jnls.cust.serv@oupjournals.org. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): +44 (0) 1865 353907. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353485. In the US, please contact: Journals Customer Service Department, Oxford University Press, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513, USA. Email: jnlorders@oupjournals.org. Tel (and answerphone outside normal working hours): 800 852 7323 (toll-free in USA/Canada). Fax: 919 677 1714. In Japan, please contact: Journals Customer Services, Oxford University Press, 1-1-17-5F, Mukugoaka, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 113-0023, Japan. Email: okudaoup@po.iijnet.or.jp. Tel: (03) 3813 1461. Fax: (03) 3818 1522.

Oxford Journals Environmental and Ethical Policies. Oxford Journals is committed to working with the global community to bring the highest quality research to the widest possible audience. Oxford Journals will protect the environment by implementing environmentally friendly policies and practices wherever possible. Please see http://www.oxfordjournals.org/ethicalpolicies.html for further information on Oxford Journals' environmental and ethical policies.

Permissions. For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles/information from this journal, please visit www.oxfordjournals.org/jnls/permissions.

Advertising. Inquiries about advertising should be sent to Helen Pearson, Oxford Journals Advertising, PO Box 347, Abingdon OX14 1GJ, UK. Email: Helen@oxfordads.com. Tel: +44 (0) 1235 201904. Fax: +44 (0) 8704 296864.

Disclaimer. Statements of fact and Opinion in the articles in **Screen** are those of the respective authors and contributors and not of The John Logie Baird Centre or Oxford University Press. Neither Oxford University Press nor The John Logie Baird Centre make any representation, express or implied, in respect of the accuracy of the material in this journal and cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may be made. The reader should make his/her own evaluation as to the appropriateness or otherwise of any experimental technique described.

© 2008: The John Logie Baird Centre.
All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishers, or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, or in the USA by the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. **Screen** incorporates **Screen Education**.

ISSN 0036-9543

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd, Salisbury, UK.
Printed by Bell and Bain Ltd, Glasgow, UK.

editors

John Caughie
Simon Frith
Annette Kuhn
Karen Lury
Jackie Stacey
Sarah Street

reports and debates editor

Jackie Stacey

reviews editor

Karen Lury

website editor

Annette Kuhn

production editor

Caroline Beven

administrative assistant

Elizabeth Anderson

editorial advisory board

Tim Bergfelder (UK)
William Boddy (USA)
Charlotte Brunsdon (UK)
Alison Butler (UK)
Erica Carter (UK)
Sean Cubitt (Australia)
Stephanie Donald (Australia)
Dimitris Eleftheriotis (UK)
John Fletcher (UK)
Christine Geraghty (UK)
Claudia Gorbman (USA)
Catherine Grant (UK)
Myra Macdonald (UK)
Laura U. Marks (Canada)
Diane Negra (UK)
Alastair Phillips (UK)
Murray Smith (UK)
Will Straw (Canada)
Julian Stringer (UK)
Ravi Vasudevan (India)

editorial

Screen
Gilmorehill Centre
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
screen@arts.gla.ac.uk

internet sites:

http://www.screen.arts.gla.ac.uk
http://www.screen.oxfordjournals.org

Screen

49:1 Spring 2008

issue editor
Karen Lury

SEUNG-HOON JEONG and DUDLEY ANDREW: Grizzly ghost: Herzog, Bazin and the cinematic animal **1**

SU HOLMES: 'The viewers have . . . taken over the airwaves'? Participation, reality TV and approaching the audience-in-the text **13**

JAMES BENNETT: The television personality system: televisual stardom revisited after film theory **32**

BRETT MILLS: 'Paranoia, paranoia, everybody's coming to get me': *Peep Show*, sitcom, and the surveillance society **51**

Bette Davis dossier

MARTIN SHINGLER: Introduction **65**

MARTIN SHINGLER and CHRISTINE GLEDHILL: Bette Davis: actor/star **67**

MARK GLANCY: 'What would Bette Davis do?' British reactions to Bette Davis in the 1940s: a case study of *Now, Voyager* **77**

ED SIKOV: 'Don't let's ask for the moon – we have a star!' Bette Davis as gay icon **86**

reviews

WILLIAM BODDY: Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* **95**

KRISTIAN MOEN: Amelie Hastie, *Cupboards of Curiosity: Women, Recollection and Film History* **99**

TINA WASSERMAN: Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* **103**

PAUL RIXON: Sylvia Harvey (ed.), *Trading Culture: Global Traffic and Local Culture in Film and Television* **107**

JAY STEWART: John Phillips, *Transgender on Screen* **110**

GER ZIELINSKI: Thomas Waugh, *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* **115**

cover illustration
Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939)

Grizzly ghost: Herzog, Bazin and the cinematic animal

SEUNG-HOON JEONG and DUDLEY ANDREW

When Zarathustra's loneliness speaks,
it is his animals who are speaking.
Martin Heidegger

Danger, death, alterity and sublimation have obsessed Werner Herzog throughout his wayward career. He has hurled himself repeatedly against the limits of the human, filming the outrageous aspirations of individuals and of entire cultures within fierce landscapes that stand indifferent or belch back. In his first feature, *Lebenszeichen/Signs of Life* (1968), Herzog tracked and provoked his hero's madness; then he pursued the lunatic schemes of Aguirre and Fitzcarraldo in South America.[1] He has collaborated with overreachers such as the sculptor Steiner, that reclusive giant of an Alpine athlete, and he has delved into the astounding rituals of such sequestered peoples as the Wodaabe of Niger and the aborigines of Australia.[2] His camera strains to discern the *Fata Morgana* of freedom envisaged by the deaf-blind and by Kaspar Hauser, that pure primitive released from a cave into civilization at eighteen years old.[3] On the two occasions when he turned to literature, Herzog chose the psychotic murderer Woyzeck and the vampire Nosferatu, romantic bloodthirsty beasts.[4]

Herzog has constantly surpassed himself, seeking ever higher cliffs from which to dangle his camera. Once he climbed towards the mouth of a volcano from whose rumblings a whole city had fled, save the lone man onto whom Herzog fastened (*La Soufrière* [1977]), while for *Herz aus Glas/Heart of Glass* (1976), Herzog put his entire cast into a hypnotic trance. By the early 1980s he had come to seem a bizarre and rather

1 *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes/Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972); *Fitzcarraldo* (1982).

2 *Die grosse Ekstase des Bildschnitzers Steiner/The Strange Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1974); *Wodaabe – Die Hirten der Sonne. Nomaden am Südrand der Sahara/Wodaabe – Herdsmen of the Sun* (Made for TV, 1989); *Wo die grünen Ameisen träumen/Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984).

3 *Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit/Land of Silence and Darkness* (1971); *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle/The Enigma of Kaspar Hause* (1974).

4 *Woyzeck* (1979); *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht/Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979).

Screen 49:1 Spring 2008
© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn001

pathetic stuntman, the 'Evil Knievel' of cinema. Unlike his compatriot Rainer Fassbinder, who manipulated or travestied standard genres and the conventions of studio style, and thus regularly and to devastating effect turned out films of increasing mastery, Herzog made his reputation in the savage outdoors, straining against every limit by which civilization defines what a human being is.

André Bazin had already identified Herzog's genre as films of 'exploration', which promise to represent risk and to record danger. Bazin noted that in an otherwise forgettable film, *Victoire sur l'Annapurna* (Marcel Ichac, 1953), Maurice Herzog (the world-famous mountain climber) lost both his camera and his fingers when 'an avalanche snatched the camera from his hands'.[5] Unfilmed, the genuine danger of this event arose from a decisive moment of total contingency that grabs the spectator. Similarly the making of the 'overwhelming film, *Kon Tiki*', he argues, 'is itself an aspect of the adventure. Those fluid and trembling images are as it were [an] objectivized memory,' less of what was seen than of what was experienced: excitement and fear. 'It is not so much the photograph of the killer whale that interests us as the photograph of the *danger*.' Danger thus exists beyond representation, as in Jean Rouch's *The Lion Hunters* (1965), in which violent sounds indicate through impossibly blurry images the precise moment when the director is attacked by the beast, losing control of his camera in a close encounter with death.

But as a story *The Lion Hunters*, like other films of danger, cannot end there. Rouch retrieved his camera and continued to follow the hunters until they dispatched the marauding lion and returned to their village. The adventure is then replayed as a performance before children and handed down in poems recited by griots. In this way the fear of danger is domesticated via representation. 'Should the viewer be disappointed?', asks Bazin. How can we ask for more? We must excuse the filmmaker for coming back from the brink of death, for had he truly gone over the edge, no film would exist to complain about.[6] Serge Daney, commenting on Bazin, notes succinctly: 'The trip switch is therefore the death of the filmmaker'. Pushed to the very limit, the filmmaker, it seems, must die with his camera in hand. 'In its more anodyne guise, this is also the fetishism of "filming as decisive moment", of filming as risk, and of risk as what justifies the making of the film, conferring on it a certain surplus value.'[7] The value of this supplement is precisely that of Bazin's 'Mummy Complex', only conversely, for Herzog's cinema of risk aims to embalm not life but death. A fetishist, he gets as close as possible to the real thing, embellishing everything that has to do with death. His films thus elaborately supplement what they strive – and necessarily fail – to deliver.

Bazin identifies one of culture's most fantastic fetishes in his essay on Pierre Braunberger's *La Course de taureaux/Bullfight* (1951). Shocked by its excessive images of dying bulls which substitute for the sacrifice of the toreador, he reasoned that the movie's spectators do not form an

5 André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 162.

6 André Bazin, 'Avec *Naufragé volontaire* et *Forêt sacré* le reportage filmé devient une aventure spirituelle', *Radio-Cinéma-Télévision*, no. 275 (1955).

7 Serge Daney, 'The screen of fantasy (Bazin and animals)', in Ivone Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 37.

ersatz audience as at a (theatrical) representation, but take up the position of the crowd in a ritual involving the 'mystical triad of animal, man crowd', with death as its 'metaphysical kernel'. While beasts often function for Bazin as bearers of a mortal danger that he hated to see vitiated by montage (Charlot in the lion's cage in *The Circus* [Charlie Chaplin, 1928], Nanook and the seal in *Nanook of the North* [Robert J. Flaherty, 1922], the alligator and the boy in *Louisiana Story* [Robert J. Flaherty, 1948]), watching these bulls die is something else, since it reminds him that 'for every creature death is the unique moment par excellence . . . the frontier between the duration of consciousness and the objective time of things'. Bazin concludes that the existence of annihilation in the ring means that 'On the screen, the toreador dies every afternoon'.[8] Thus the brave spectators at the bullfight and in the cinema are inoculated against their own deaths, which are postponed for a while. They can attend another bullfight or see this film again tomorrow.

In the reflections of critics like Bazin, cinema has gone beyond traditional western philosophy which suggests that animals do not know death the way humans do. As the name indicates, animals have been considered *animate* (even undying) from Descartes through Heidegger, since they have neither reason nor language, and so are unable to project an identity.[9] Lacking subjectivity, animals do not die as humans do; they simply expire and perdure through their species. Cinema, however, has given us an idea of 'death itself' far starker than the humanized notion that occupies philosophy. Animal life is depicted by the camera as unconscious and uncomprehending, and thus close to death. Bazin's post-philosophical relation to animals is influenced by his immersion in cinema. Although inheriting western metaphysics, including the existentialism and phenomenology that were rife in his day, he was also, since boyhood, a fanatical naturalist who lived among animals and studied their behaviour.[10] Bazin felt the cinema capable of staring at the otherness of animals with a preternatural eye, just as it can expose (make a time exposure of, though not capture) the otherness of death. Like animals, the cinema hovers at the edge of familiarity. Though largely constrained and even domesticated, animals and the cinema both occasionally exhibit a wildness beyond our reach and understanding. They can (or should) shock us into reappraising life and death. *Grizzly Man* shocks us in just this way.

For the most part, however, cinema, as both practice and institution, contributes to the vast cultural tree that has grown from the 'metaphysical kernel' of death. Tied to the mummy complex, cinema symbolizes, civilizes and effectively defers death through *memento mori.* This was Bazin's point: that although death itself can never be represented but only experienced, cinema provides images of death that tempt us to approach 'death itself' as never before. When taken to the limit, such representations become a riveting pornographic spectacle, as in the time-lapse of decaying animals in *A Zed and Two Noughts* (Peter Greenaway, 1985). Here death is defied through its insistent repetition

8 André Bazin, 'Death every afternoon', in Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism*, pp. 27–31.

9 Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

10 André Bazin, 'L'importance d'être Coco', an endearing anecdote about a parrot he brought back from Uruguay published in the necrological issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 91 (1959).

within the film and through the potentially infinite rescreenings *of* the film. But *A Zed and Two Noughts* depicts not death so much as chemistry (*phusis*, in the Greek that Heidegger prefers), for flesh is shown disintegrating at a constant scientific rate, a rate Bazin called 'the objective time of things'. Cinematic repetition of material decomposition satisfies a kind of regulated death drive that leads to the brink of the inorganic state, the ontological boundary, beyond which lies an inert world of things-in-themselves. In witnessing the end of other organisms, cinema lets us imagine the experience of death in advance, inoculating us against it. Derrida would call it a *pharmakon*.[11]

Bazin imputed to the camera as well as to the spectator an instinct to touch directly the real (or Real)[12] before it is filtered and refracted through consciousness into representation. For Bazin, every depiction of danger and death on screen becomes charged when it is felt to be in contact with the Real. This is why, for example, 'the simple snapshot of Scott and his companions at the Pole' found beside their frozen bodies is worth more than the entire 1948 Technicolor feature in which Michael Redgrave 'played' the English explorer and in which spectacular alpine landscapes substituted for Antarctica. Rather than construct elaborate representations (*memento mori*) meant to alleviate fear of death by symbolically overcoming or sublimating it, might not the camera pursue its fascination by wandering straight into the fearful uncharted zone of the mysterious Real? This is the journey Timothy Treadwell's camera would seem to take in *Grizzly Man*, right up to the moment when, like Scott's in the Antarctic, it was found at its owner's final campsite.

Herzog takes Treadwell to be the kind of force Deleuze and Guattari famously termed 'becoming-animal'. Treadwell spent thirteen summers in Alaska living beside the bears he thought he had befriended, until he was betrayed by one who devoured him and his girlfriend. We are told that Treadwell exchanged his humanity for something unknowable when he stepped over a line no Native American had crossed in their seven thousand years of coexistence with bears. Deep in the grizzly maze, Treadwell's camera monitored his flirtation with 'becoming-animal', up to that final moment beyond which there could be no others; the forbidden snuff-moment marking the end of subjectivity with the extinction of the subject itself. Herzog wants his audience to witness the ripping of the membrane separating human from animal, vision from madness, life from death.

Yet let us not pretend otherwise: *Grizzly Man* is a commercial feature film, a fully cultural enterprise . . . but with a difference. The indigestible footage in its belly gives *Grizzly Man* the nightmare of losing control, of 'letting fearsome things fly', dismembering identity and unleashing becomings.[13] For Treadwell's footage does not just relay a dangerous event; it constitutes a fearsome event. At the centre of the Herzog's professional film lies Treadwell's wild video, and at the core of that video lies the (missing) footage of agony, when a life ends in death.

11 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 63–171.

12 Bazin never referred to Lacan, yet something close to the Lacanian concept of the Real underlies 'Death every afternoon' insofar as that concept concerns the world as such, as well as the unconscious remainder that the subject cannot integrate into the Symbolic from the Imaginary. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XI* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), pp. 55ff.

13 Steven Baker, 'What does becoming-animal look like?', in Nigel Rothfeld (ed.), *Representing Animals* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press 2002), p. 74.

These missing 'documents' of Treadwell's end are 'the negative imprints of the expedition – its inscription chiseled deep'.[14] Herzog's serene narration sounds like a disingenuous condolatory address, pretending to help us understand what Treadwell's death may signify. For Herzog knowingly fails to acculturate death, and suppresses the horrific sounds that accompanied, indeed constituted, an experience of real death. In censoring the soundtrack – effectively cupping his hand over Treadwell's screams – Herzog counsels Treadwell's former girlfriend: 'You should destroy it. It will be the white elephant in your room all your life.'

A 'white elephant' is a possession unwanted by the owner but difficult to dispose of, according to the Random House Dictionary. Resorting to this limp figure of speech, this dead metaphor, Herzog ironically brings to life the dangerous animal-metaphor, namely 'animetaphor', that, according to Akira Mizuta Lipitt, does not serve as a figure but rather leads to the extratextual animal beyond language.[15] Given the context, should we not imagine a screaming white elephant bursting through the civilized room of discourse? Perhaps Treadwill screamed with the 'animal cry' that according to Hegel defines the animal as 'anti-human' at the moment of its violent death.[16] As 'human, all-too-human', Herzog chose not to replay this 'anti-human' scream. The implication is that it would have been unbearable. Can we excuse Herzog for protecting us from the record of the grizzly man literally becoming-animal?

In lodging *Grizzly Man* dead centre in his genre of exploration films, Bazin would have identified the adventurer as Herzog, not Treadwell, for it is Herzog who returns from the brink after glimpsing danger and death. Treadwell's purpose was different; this protector of bears was not out to make an adventure film at all. Indeed, he appears secure and peaceful in his home video, shrewdly minimizing danger. He caresses a small fox as he would a pet, and seldom approaches bears bigger than himself. Between the grizzly in the background and the grizzly man in the foreground lies the gap between animal and human, nature and civilization. Filling that gap with endless chatter, Treadwell weaves a verbal mesh to protect himself from what is wild. Replete with language, the video in fact hardly shows a man 'becoming-animal'.

Treadwell could not be more human(ist) than when he prays for rain so that rivers will abound in salmon and bears can feast. He names his bears 'Mr Chocolate,' 'Sgt Brown' and 'Michelle Pfeiffer'; his end will come at the claws and teeth of one he did not name, 'Bear 141', numbered by the National Park Service which counts these forces of nature as if they were taxpayers. Treadwell's holy war against the Park Service replays the symbolic distinction between nature and civilization, a distinction and a war to which animals are indifferent. Language cannot explain, cannot even ask, why 'Bear 141' killed Timothy Treadwell. Language, symbolic system *par excellence*, would keep Treadwell from becoming-animal, at least until his final scream in violent death. Thus the man unknowingly closest to death is also the man who keeps death distant

14 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 162.

15 Akira Mizuta Lipitt, 'The death of an animal', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2002), pp. 86–99.

16 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 51; Lippit, *Electric Animal*, pp. 45–6.

through rhetoric. Declaring himself their Prince Valiant ('I will die for bears'), Treadwell puts off a death in which he will die *by* them.

But the video reveals more than the rhetorical, pedagogical, even judicial purpose Treadwell intended; it contains surprises that, we believe, effect a becoming-animal all the same. His camera haphazardly comes upon traces of real animality at odds with its owner's mawkish discourse. On the big screen we encounter raw images of a bear skeleton, decaying animal corpses, faeces. Treadwell may explain – and sentimentally – what caused an animal's death, but the brutality of the images scrambles his bathos, figuring an impossible rhetorical relation between animality and language: animetaphor, which is at work especially when the actual deaths of animals (the rabbits in *La Règle du jeu/Rules of the Game* [Jean Renoir, 1939]) throw the spectator outside the diegesis of a film into the jungle of the actual conditions of filmmaking and the problem of real rather than represented death.[17] Not always thanatopic, animetaphors are what pull us across the border between language and fact, figure and event, between the inside and outside of cinema. An example is the steaming lump of 'Wendy's poop' that in Treadwell's language becomes 'a gift' by which he can feel the bear's inside, that is, the inside of what is outside him.[18] Another example is the closeup of the killer bear's inscrutable face. Its features are as utterly unreadable as its habitat, 'the grizzly maze'. These traces of the outside captured on the image track operate as animetaphors on the threshold between naming and being, subject and other, human and animal, even between the organic and the inorganic. Thus the bear's dung, the result of consumption, is the inorganic refuse of an organism. A pile disintegrating into chemical elements of indifferent nature, it represents what an organism will in the end become. Following 'Wendy's poop' leads Treadwell to his own inorganic future, the exterior material from the inside of his outside.[19] 'Wendy's poop' lies on a path from the human through the animal to the inorganic, the very bottom rung of being.

Although Treadwell's rhetoric claims the anonymous bear's stare to be 'wise', its blankness appears rather like a skull or a rock. Even Herzog finds in this stare 'only the half-bored interest in food', reminding us that, for Heidegger, animals endure 'profound boredom'. Living by instinct, the openness of the world is closed to them. The animal is 'an existing, real thing that has gone beyond the difference between being and beings'.[20] Animals never experience death, because, lacking language, their existence is already thing-like, thus close to death. Non-conscious, they are in a perpetual state of living death. Paradoxically, this closed opacity of animal indifference serves as an opening for human being. Hence the lure of animals for philosophers. Heidegger finds in their profound boredom 'the *very origin of potentiality* – and with it, of Dasein, that is, the being which exists in the form of potentiality-for-being [*poter-essere*]'.[21] Taking another tack, Nietzsche uses animals to denigrate human '"consciousness", their weakest and most fallible

17 Vivian Sobchack's discussion of Renoir's rabbits is cited in Lippit, 'The death of an animal', p. 14. We would add that rabbits also die graphically onscreen in Robert Bresson's *Mouchette* (1967).

18 Like *le don absolu*, this material trace exists prior to being named by Treadwell and absorbed into an exchange system, which must inevitably desecrate it. See Jacques Derrida, *Donner le temps 1* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), pp. 95–138.

19 Treadwell does not yet know it, but he and his girlfriend will be united inside a bear, later to become non-individualized excrement.

20 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 91. See also Matthew Calarco, 'Heidegger's zoontology', in Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 18–30.

21 Agamben, *The Open*, pp. 61–8.

organ!',[22] which restricts their potential for wild being. 'Nobility in humans,' he wrote, 'does not transcend the animal condition, but is built on it.'[23] Nietzsche's view, here as so often, reemerges in Deleuze and Guattari, for whom 'the stare' signals 'the inhuman in human beings'. The face in 'close-up, with its inanimate white surfaces, its shining black holes, its emptiness and boredom', converges on that of the animal.[24] Or rather, the face is neither animal nor human but a 'Body without Organs', an unorganized plane of immanence, which obstinately refuses signifying subjectivity. Becoming-animal means abandoning identity and individuation.

So what does becoming-animal look like?[25] Can it be represented cinematographically? Niether the literal adoption of animal behaviour in Thierry Zéno's grotseque *Vase de noces* (1974)[26] nor the transformations imaginatively depicted in so many werewolf films are what Deleuze and Guattari had in mind. They are clear on this: far from imitation, becoming-animal must get 'past the wall' of identity and definition. The lover reaches this point when, in closing his eyes, he goes through the face of the beloved so as to streak to the limits of the human.[27] Nietzsche hoped to overcome those limits by vaulting the wall of ossified language with the Dionysian fragments of a discourse made up of intensities, raptures and potentials. Hence our epigraph from Heidegger: 'when Zarathustra's loneliness speaks, it is his animals who are speaking'. Look at Francis of Assisi, the prototype for André Bazin. As envisioned by William Carlos Williams, Saint Francis preached to the birds not to convert them but to take his place beside them as a parallel forest creature, becoming-animal by unhinging social discourse and speaking poetry.[28]

Let us then take Treadwell's verbosity as animetaphorical. Unlike Herzog's measured narration, Treadwell sounds like a Prince Valiant spouting an improvized, excessive discourse of hubris, in his overexcited, high-pitched tone. The mixture of grandiosity with childish rage betrays the pre-human (even extra-human) source of a non-communicative language reverberating with desire. Aguirre spoke such language as he drifted madly into the rainforest, proclaiming himself master of the wilderness. Treadwell speaks it also, haranguing absent interlocutors in the Alaskan tundra. Did he regress to such solipsism through the persecution mania that followed his failure in an audition for the television series *Cheers*, when he came second to Woody Harrelson? First he descended into depression and substance abuse, then came the quixotic delusion that he must protect creatures as asocial as himself. A stylish amateur actor with floppy blonde hair and a trademark bandana, Treadwell, talking a mile a minute and repetitively, excoriates the civilization he felt had rejected him: he begs to be admired for condemning the Park Service; overlong takes bristle with curses; he gives the finger to his human enemies. If Treadwell reaches becoming-animal, it is not through his love of animals but through a drastic misanthropy. He deterritorializes the safety zone established to protect bears, railing not against its practicality but against its existence as such.

22 F.W. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Volume III, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Penguin, 1980), p. 2.

23 Alphonso Lingis, 'Nietzsche and animals', in Calarco and Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy*, p. 14.

24 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 171.

25 This is the subject and title of Steven Baker's essay, cited in fn. 13.

26 In which a farmer breeds with his pig and later kills the mutant offspring.

27 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 170–72. 'Get past the wall' is a phrase they take explicitly from Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn* (1938), in which the author is describing a transpersonal erotic drive.

28 Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 234–5.

Treadwell would stand outside every enclosure, a schizophrenic nomad, a grizzly man not to be penned in by any institution or on any reservation, no matter how vast.

Treadwell's video may be taken as many things at once: a documentary and a diary, an apocalypse and a confession, a proclamation of war and a pacifist home movie. But before any of this it is an audition tape of a standup comedian bellowing 'Fuck you!'. Tossed into a crazy salad of genres, Treadwell's raw image-sound footage constitutes an animetaphor, in contrast to Herzog's well-made documentary film. Treadwell's video is the authentic cinematic kernel, the uncontrollable outside, lodged inside the film, a trace of the Real which Herzog tries vainly to envelop in his well-formed film language. But no set of interviews, no psychoanalysis, could ever bring to light Treadwell's completely inscrutable bear-like inside. Thus, it was not through his extraordinary sympathy with, knowledge of, or imitation of bears, but through his frenetic squawking in the wilderness, and then, beyond language, through his death that he reached the threshold of the clandestine, the imperceptible, and even – to use the Deleuzean term – the molecular. Timothy Treadwell did not entirely fail to become a grizzly man, to become-animal.

Treadwell haunts us as we write; indeed he haunts all the reviews and all the viewers of *Grizzly Man*. His afterlife has been assured because the body of Herzog's movie carries his death inside it as a kind of ghost. Unlike the exploits of Aguirre (restaged) or of Little Dieter (recounted after the fact, in *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* [1997]), Treadwell's courage, madness and final trauma are delivered directly from the space of his death, thanks to the copious video diary he kept of his Alaskan summers. Pouncing ferociously on such graphic material, Herzog wanted to push cinema beyond mimesis through its confrontation with, and incorporation of, video; in effect he has tried to follow Treadwell beyond the human and beyond representation, reaching the thing itself. Herzog bravely watched this 'Grizzly Man' turn into decomposed organic matter; and then he helped the dead man project himself into that airy parliament that we, his spectators, comprise. Thus *Grizzly Man* passes through its own material remains into that sublime realm so many of Herzog's earlier subjects – indeed Herzog himself – vainly and clumsily tried to reach. This grizzly man is a genuine *revenant*. Having swallowed Treadwell's moment of death, Herzog crossed the line Bazin had drawn when the latter argued that the recording of death is a category mistake and in any case an obscenity, something that in its wisdom classical theatre had left 'ob-scene', off stage. Theatre (tragedy) is one of many devices the human race has developed to endure the unthinkable, that which is essentially beyond *logos* and representation. By replaying (though not representing) the forbidden moment, Herzog means to provoke not the fear of danger that we share with animals but the terror of

death, which humans sense comes from beyond language and culture. And yet, Herzog acculturates this terror, sublimating it, by giving his grizzly man an audience, effectively reanimating him.

In Derrida's (anti-concept) *différance*, language defers death, the ultimate 'outside', through the dissemination of traces inside an indefinite system of differences. Now, as a text of carefully regulated differences, *Grizzly Man* includes two folds of animetaphor that gesture beyond itself and beyond the system altogether, seeming to touch this 'outside', and producing the frisson that makes this such an unforgettable film. First, within Treadwell's video, images of non-conscious animality – traces that Treadwell does not recognize – mock his discourse. Second, Treadwell's video as a whole operates animetaphorically inside Herzog's domineering narration. Herzog must surround the dangerous video with interviews and observations of the sort that are standard in documentaries.

As to the first kind of animetaphor, Treadwell's video proceeds from the outset with an eye towards the death that will ultimately mark its conclusion. As for the second, Herzog could not have dreamed of making his film without Treadwell's death. Only in death did this amateur zoologist make the difference he failed to make in life. His words have reached us after a long delay, but only as amplified through Herzog's words. Therefore, not only was Treadwell's death the final threshold marking the end of his life subjectively, it was also the threshold beyond which his life has been objectively resuscitated. What both Treadwell and Herzog filmed could be visualized only because of this invisible threshold beyond him, on the 'outside'.

Treadwell's video within Herzog's film raises another paradox. To attack civilization like a guerrilla, Treadwell went into the wilderness armed with two camcorders, a hi-tech product of civilization. This device transmits his deferred desire, putting him in our presence 'existing contemporaneously with us', 'within the actual range of our senses'. In cinema, says Bazin, an actor conveys his 'identity in duration', though his presence is certainly reduced in comparison with the live theatre actor.[29] Let us call this 'quasi-presence' the ontological state of a spectre that is visible but intangible, that is, not present in flesh and blood. 'We are spectralized by the shot', says Derrida, 'captured or possessed by spectrality in advance. . . . A spectre is both visible and invisible, both phenomenal and nonphenomenal: a trace that marks the present with its absence in advance.'[30] The cinematic image is such a quasi-present trace, implying presence after absence. A spectre who does not exist at the moment of shooting appears after the fact through a screen, '*un miroir au reflet différé, dont le tain retiendrait l'image*' [a mirror with a delayed reflection; the tin foil of which retains the image].[31] Now Treadwell makes a perfect avatar of spectrality, because while watching *Grizzly Man* we already know that, in every deed and at every moment, 'he is dead and he is going to die'. Straddling two tenses, this famous expression of mortality is how Roland Barthes defines the *punctum* he

29 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 96.

30 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, trans Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 117.

31 André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), p. 152. [Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 95.]

experienced in the photograph of a nineteenth-century assassin awaiting execution.[32] Likewise, Treadwell has already died and now speaks as a mummy, a quasi-being who is neither being nor non-being. Unlike ordinary cinematic images, his presence before his own camera is destined to be visualized in the future perfect tense after he has traversed invisible death: 'I will have been dead when I am seen and speak, that is, when I *am*'. In Derrida's words, he will become 'more dead alive than *post mortem*', like Freud's primitive father murdered by his sons, who then becomes more dominant as a phantom that haunts them.[33] To become 'more dead alive' amounts to becoming more present without consciousness, more unconsciously present.

Treadwell's putative transformations on screen (becoming-ghost as a supplement to becoming-animal) are particularly complicated because he is not filmed as in a standard documentary or fictional work, but rather as in a private reality TV show via his own broadcast system. Bazin understood television to share something both of theatre (the actor is present to the viewer) and of cinema (the spectator is not present to the actor), yet 'the television actor has a sense of the millions of ears and eyes virtually present and represented by the electronic camera'.[34] Treadwell indeed addresses such a camera and assumes precisely such an imagined audience. But unlike the ideal television situation, he cannot be present to the audience instantly; he knows that whoever watches him belongs to a future from which he, Treadwell, will be excluded. Using Bazin's vocabulary, why not say that 'millions of ears and eyes [are] virtually present' to him, like the ghostly figures from the future that visit the hero of *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962)?

Though not quite the same as a visible spectre (Hamlet's Ghost), one can be invisibly haunted in one's head.[35] Performing in front of future spectators, virtual ones whom he correctly imagines will see his video after he has passed away, Treadwell imagines that it is we, his spectators, who have crossed a time zone, from our future to his present. As for us, by attending his delayed on-air news broadcast from the grizzly maze, by accepting the place he has made for us as his virtual spectators, we become ghosts. He as spectre and we as ghosts encounter each other in this real-time play of *différance*, in which he came to us too late and we have not yet come to him. This is an encounter in and of a third kind, a time that unfolds in the future perfect tense, for he will already have died before our watching him, the spectre, and we ghosts will already have watched him before his death. Such an impossible encounter in an impossible time is possible only because of the passage through death of a non-conscious quasi-being. So we could conclude: only becoming-spectre can bring about absolutely new encounters – with another being, with another time and with another territory – which are outside of, though immanent in, our being, our time and our territory. In becoming-ghost, Treadwell not only supplements his becoming-animal, but also beckons to us, encouraging our becoming-ghost, which takes us through his transformation to animal, to nature and to death-as-such. Observing

32 Roland Barthes, *La chamber Claire* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma-Gallimard-Seuil, 1980), p. 150.

33 Jacques Derrida, 'Before the law', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), pp. 198–9. Also, see Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans James Strachey (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1950).

34 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 97.

35 Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, p. 115.

this process we recognize a deep rapport between human and animal, subject and other, civilization and nature. To put it another way, becoming-animal occurs spatially and synchronically on a Body without Organs, (BwO), while becoming-ghost happens in a temporal and diachronic dimension through the simultaneous play of different tenses.

Now, concretely, what kind of relationship does this double becoming enable us to grasp within these dizzying dichotomies? If the animal's profound boredom constitutes the background of *Dasein* (for Heidegger), if becoming-animal is equal to becoming-molecular, returning the subject to the fundamental asubjective state of BwO (for Deleuze and Guattari), and even if 'man' is a rational 'animal' (for classical thinkers as well as in common parlance), we can say that the animal is the very basis of human being, and that the other is the ontological foundation of the subject. Though the grizzly still lives in a *terra incognito* that human language cannot penetrate, the 'overwhelming indifference of nature' which Herzog sees in the bear's blank stare may signal something more than the absolute antipode of civilization; it may signal the unconscious clearing or BwO, a potentiality for being, and thus for culture.

Imagine dissolving the relation between the two terms, human and animal, that underpin so many anthropocentric dichotomies in the West. *Grizzly Man* does just this, even though Treadwell may well have been motivated by conventional Rousseauism. *Grizzly Man* stands as witness to Treadwell's becoming-animal/ghost in spite of himself, revealing how a civilized subject can construct itself in language only through the animal otherness of nature, where indeterminacy and death-as-such remain excluded from every symbolic process. The human and the animal are surely different in kind, but they are antagonistic to each other only when humans allegedly transcend the animal. Thus the pairs of dichotomies we have encountered are asymmetrically non-dialectical, rather than symmetrically dialectical, and a fluid mutuality is at play between our being, animality, and a ghostly quasi-being. Led by a grizzly ghost, we learn that the human and the ghost coexist. Were it not for quasi-beings, there would be no possibility of genuine and transforming encounters. Every discovery and each becoming stems virtually and actually from an encounter with ghosts.

In conclusion,Treadwell's self-video proves that becoming-animal can indeed occur in cinema. As for Herzog, having pursued borderline madmen through his whole career, not to mention the half-beast Dracula, Treadwell may have appeared as just another quixotic existentialist. But he was different, and Herzog happily failed to suture the grizzly man's torrent of words into his own slick narration. Through the yawning gap opened up between the two irreconcilable languages in *Grizzly Man*, the spectator/auditor glimpses the Real and recognizes it as death itself. The inevitable failure of human language to incorporate the animal scream triggered Herzog's desire to film the other, and thus to initiate a series of self-defeating signifying operations along the cinematic chain. *Grizzly Man* loudly testifies to a central tenet of postmodern philosophy: the

unrepresentable Real is the powerhouse for every representational system working in *différance*.

We do not mean to denigrate Herzog for the inadequacy of his film language, since what he grasps in Treadwell's digital camera is the very essence of the cinematic image: contingency in *différance*. When mysterious black spots on Treadwell's tent are revealed to be the traces of a pet fox's paws, Herzog rightly admires the secret beauty of this 'seemingly empty' but 'glorious improvized moment' that no studio reconstruction could ever foresee. 'For a filmmaker, things fall into your lap that you could never dream of. There is something like an inexplicable magic of cinema. . . . Sometimes images themselves develop their own life, their own mysterious start.'

This kind of surrealist 'hallucination which is also a fact', this cinematic magic which seemingly enters the image from the outside, kindles the desire to enter the real itself through images. 'Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image.'[36] Hence the ambivalence of the cinematic image, a human sign as well as an interface with the thing-in-itself. *Grizzly Man* exemplifies, like few other films, cinema's primary capacity to return to what was once before the camera and then to project it onto the screen and beyond. As for the audience, we watch something already filmed, while simultaneously encountering something existing 'out there' prior to being filmed. As it draws the nonverbal into language, this film in particular exhibits a metaphoric process – becoming animetaphoric in spite of itself – that leads to the contingent world underlying every signification system. Herzog aims at this unspeakable world. He was captivated by Treadwell's camera because it served as the grizzly man's 'omnipresent companion [which] not only explores wildlife but scrutinizes his innermost being, his demons, his exhilarations', in other words, his becoming-animal.

Through a belated advent made possible by two cameras, a ghost is called forth, triggering our becoming-ghost. Subordinating film language to the animal scream, Herzog has given us room to think about the relation between animal and human death, about the (im)possibility of becoming-animal, about the quasi-presence of ghosts, about the ontology of the cinematic image and about the other real worlds immanent in all these conundrums. He has, in short, cleared room to think about the unthinkable. In *Grizzly Man* the cinema expands in both of its dimensions: spatially (through becoming-animal) and temporally (though becoming-ghost). If we cannot help but privilege the human over the animal, *Grizzly Man* demonstrates how this can involve less, not more language. Inside such a film we sense the Real as the empty zone described by a triangle whose three points have tantalized us throughout these reflections: cinema, animal, ghost. Staring blankly into that zone, let us conclude: man is a cinematic animal.

36 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, pp. 15–16.

‘The viewers have . . . taken over the airwaves’? Participation, reality TV and approaching the audience-in-the-text

SU HOLMES

Reality TV may display the ‘elemental truth’ that ‘our “real” selves are only ever the performance of a role’,[1] but at the same time, its particular fascination with the parameters of the *media*ted self – and how this comes into being via a relay between performer, text and viewer – has a decidedly *de*naturalizing effect where the construction of identity is concerned. In emphasizing how appearing on reality TV functions as a form of self-validation in contemporary society, we simultaneously collude with the naturalization of the hierarchy on which this idea is based. Self-realization and validation are undoubtedly sought by participants, but more localized examples suggest that the quest itself is more precarious and uncertain, particularly as it circles around the relationship between onscreen participants and audience.

Through reality TV, television has become increasingly fascinated by our power relations with the medium (‘You decide!’), and as such it pivots on the very concept which has historically occupied centre stage in the study of media audiences; yet, at the same time, it is widely acknowledged that the study of media audiences is at a crossroads. Not only do we now face the potential challenge of ‘too many texts’,[2] but technology appears to be challenging the traditional parameters of debates about ‘active’ or ‘passive’ audiences – what Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst call the ‘Incorporation/Resistance Paradigm’.[3] The advent of interactivity has clearly been invoked as part

1 Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn, *Reality TV: Realism and Revelation* (London: Wallflower, 2005), p. 101.

2 Nick Couldry, *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 192.

3 Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences* (London: Sage, 1998).

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn002

of this new context, prompting calls for a reassessment of the relations between viewer (or 'user') and text, as well as production and consumption, agency and authorship.[4] As Henry Jenkins suggests, now that consumers 'have become key participants in media culture', the debate now centres on 'the terms of their participation', not whether audiences are active or passive.[5] There is undoubtedly something to be gained from avoiding the often dichotomous thrust of earlier debates. However, just what 'the terms of their participation' actually means is ambiguous, particularly when it comes to the role played by ideology and power.

Regular viewing of reality TV programmes may not involve participating in the interactive opportunities on offer, but this does not change the fact that such programmes self-consciously dramatize a set of relations between text and viewer as central to their textual form. In fact, while participation has been conceived as engendering 'the disappearance of the audience'[6] in so far as it blurs the boundaries between production/consumption or user/viewer, it also seems that just the opposite has also occurred. In reality TV, 'the audience' seems to be everywhere, more visible than ever. We are hailed directly to have 'our say' by voting, imaged as an excitable and boisterous crowd onscreen, constantly discussed by participants when they speculate about how they are being represented and received, solicited to call/text/email our opinions on the shows, and beckoned to step *into* the television space – to traverse the boundary between living room and screen.

Thus, the representation of 'the audience' demands analysis in its own right, as integral to the narratives which television is articulating about its relations with 'us'. For some it seems that 'the viewers have . . . taken over the airwaves'[7] (a view which points to both interactivity and the bid to recruit performers from the audience). As the interactive power of the audience is woven into the narrative textures of reality TV, the programmes make claims for viewer agency, and posit a more permeable boundary between viewer and screen. Yet they also suggest (sometimes inadvertently) a more delimited interpretation of this 'shift', while simultaneously offering glimpses into its genuinely precarious – and potentially subversive – play with notions of 'power'.

First, I clarify my conceptualization of participation, and how it can be used to examine the wider representation of audience/text relations examined here. Focusing on the UK version of *Big Brother* (Channel 4, 2000-) and *Eden* (Channel 4, 2002), I then explore the range of ways in which the participative relations between performers and viewers are conceived. My argument is that participation is fundamentally enmeshed with the discursive construction of selfhood and performance in reality TV – shaping the articulation of a self-conscious relay between the positions of 'performing' and 'viewing'. The insistence on the blurring between performing/viewing or producing/consuming, is central to ideas about a restaging of participation, and my analysis travels along a trajectory which gradually brings these spheres into closer proximity. It begins by exploring

4 P. David Marshall, *New Media Cultures* (London: Arnold, 2004).

5 Henry Jenkins, 'The cultural logic of media convergence', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), p. 36.

6 Marshall, *New Media Cultures*, p.12.

7 Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: the Work of Being Watched* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 7.

how the absent audience is discussed by presenter and participants in *Big Brother*, before considering how the 2004 series of the programme staged an internal blurring of the boundaries between 'performing' and 'viewing' – with somewhat catastrophic results. I then consider the example of *Eden*, with its even more fervent desire to insist upon the mobile and permeable nature of these roles. Here, the focus is on the viewer literally entering the televisual space as it unfolds (a possibility precluded by the technological and spatial isolation of *Big Brother*). Yet whether the viewer is ultimately welcome in this space is the focus of this analysis.

In broad terms, interactivity is generally seen to imply some form of transformative relationship between viewer/user and media form, a process in which content is modified upon reception.[8] The articulation of interactivity in reality TV – ranging across *Big Brother, Pop Idol* (ITV, 2001-03), *Fame Academy* (BBC, 2002-03), The *X-Factor* (ITV, 2004-), *I'm a Celebrity...* (ITV, 2002-), *Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC, 2003-), *The Salon* (Channel Four, 2003) or *Eden* – can be broadly linked to this concept. The core media channels through which interactive opportunities are offered are the conventional telephone, mobile phone, text messaging, digital TV and the internet. The primacy of the telephone, however, reminds us that there may be as much continuity as change here: telephone 'feedback' has been a staple of magazine and talent shows for decades, not forgetting its previous centrality on radio. In tracing a trajectory from periodicals in the 1880s, confessional magazines in the 1920s, the rise of talkback radio, 'real life' magazines in the 1980s, to the millennial event of *Big Brother*, Bridget Griffen-Foley has emphasized how 'audiences have for more than a century been contributing to successful media outlets'.[9] While the notion of modifying content on reception is hailed as the key difference of the interactive age, Griffen-Foley emphasizes how all these examples 'have addressed their consumers as textual actors . . . [and] most have allowed their consumers to feel involved in determining the nature of the text'.[10]

This is certainly true, and what seems to distinguish reality TV is a difference of degree rather than a radical shift: its solicitation of viewers as 'textual actors' pivots more self-consciously on the desire to dramatize our power relations with television, something which involves the more urgent (if not entirely new) desire to image a 'feedback' circuit between viewer and screen. In this sense, it is relevant that Nick Couldry has described interactivity as a form of '*showing, in performance*, the otherwise merely assumed connection between medium and representative social group'.[11] The immediate connotations of 'showing, in performance' may indicate inauthenticity in that (much like the scepticism surrounding performance in reality TV itself), it suggests a promotion of a kind of pseudo-power which exaggerates the scope for audience intervention on offer. There is some truth to this conception, and for all the emphasis on the 'new' media environment, what

8 Marshall, *New Media Cultures*, p. 13.

9 Bridget Griffen-Foley, 'From *Tit-Bits* to *Big Brother*: a century of audience participation', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2004), p. 533.

10 Ibid., p. 544.

11 Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 109 (my emphasis).

consistently emerges is a traditional emphasis on *participation*, with a potentially more questionable scope for audience agency. As such, I have adopted this less-loaded term in the context of this essay. But I do so in order to suggest that the idea of a 'performance of' participation has more complex possibilities than a simple reference to pseudo-agency might suggest.

When compared to reality pop shows such as *Pop Idol* and *The X-Factor*, *Big Brother* is presented as a less 'centralized' text on a number of different levels. It makes only sporadic use of an onscreen presenter/media professional, while our access to the performances is more dispersed. Although other formats use multi-platform coverage (including the promotion of extra footage on digital channels and 'exclusive' clips and messages sent to the mobile phone), in the UK *Big Brother* exploits this to a fuller extent, particularly with its live streaming on digital television (E4) and the internet. In this respect, it is the presenter-led moments of *Big Brother*, appearing live on eviction nights, which offer the most explicit calls to viewer agency. Facilitated by the fact that we vote to eject the 'loser', this is often articulated in punitive terms (something which also emphasizes that while it is presented as a democratic act, voting pivots on forms of division and exclusion). As the UK presenter Davina McCall exclaims on one occasion: 'If you've had enough of Jason's moaning, moping and whinging, then *kick him out . . .*', or 'Michelle says that she couldn't bear to be parted from her "Stu". Do you care you heartless people? If not, give her the boot.'[12] This concept of being hailed as autonomous individuals reaches its most explicit articulation in the annual final, as we are both instructed and implored to 'Get up and vote! Celebrate the fact that you live in a democracy!'[13] While this is clearly expressed in somewhat tongue-in-cheek terms (something lost in the grumblings about political decline after more people voted in the 2000 final of *Big Brother* than in the parliamentary election the same year), it is evidently in the interests of the programme to construct participation in ways which position the viewer as being in a position of dominance.

The possibilities for participation are more contradictory the further we move from the institutional 'base' of the programme. While conversations between the contestants, or modes of address from contestant to viewer, are always subject to mediation (editing, selection) by the producers, these instances can involve more contradictory references to audience participation. The audience can be invoked by the contestants as anywhere on a continuum from antagonist to confidant, but constructions usually circulate around the housemates' interest in how they are being represented, perceived and received. Although this speculation appears to be primarily prompted by their existence within the television frame, sociologist Erving Goffman would argue that it is intrinsic to any mode of performance in everyday life.[14] Goffman claims

12 *Big Brother,* tx 23 June 2004.

13 McCall, *Big Brother,* tx 29 July 2003.

14 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1969).

that underlying all social interaction is a 'fundamental dialectic' in which:

> When one enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation. . . . It would . . . be necessary for the individual to know the actual outcome or end product of the [performance] . . . during the interaction, as well as [others'] innermost feelings concerning him.[15]

15 Ibid., p. 241.

Although rarely invoked in detail, Goffman's work on self-presentation as performance is implicit in many analyses of performance in reality TV. But as the title *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* suggests, he was dealing with face-to-face encounters, such as those operative in social institutions or workplaces. This is a limitation when it comes to approaching the highly mediated nature of everyday life and, arguably, Goffman's work offers a rather abstract and dehistoricized account of social interaction and performance. In their bid to critique the traditional parameters of the 'Incorporation/Resistance Paradigm' (and to put forward a new 'Spectacle/Performance Paradigm'), Abercrombie and Longhurst map a trajectory from 'simple', 'mass' to 'diffused' audiences, suggesting that in our contemporary 'media-drenched' society, both 'audiencing' and 'performing' have become pervasive: 'Life is constant performance; we are audience and performer at the same time; everybody is an audience all the time'.[16] For Abercrombie and Longhurst, then, the notion of performance-in-everyday-life is something specific to contemporary society, and one of the reasons for this is that the media provide an important resource for everyday performance.

16 Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*, p. 57.

While Abercrombie and Longhurst are interested in reappraising approaches to the audience, their final point is not new in itself. Only a decade after Goffman's initial work, Christopher Lasch famously conceptualized a culture of narcissism, in which identity is constructed and affirmed by the ubiquitous presence of mediation. As he argues:

> Modern life is so thoroughly mediated by electronic images that we cannot help responding to others as if their actions – and our own – were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for close scrutiny at some later time. . . . This all-seeing eye no longer takes us by surprise or catches us with our defences down. We need no reminder to smile. A smile is permanently graven on our features, and we already know from which of several angles it photographs to best advantage.[17]

17 Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 47.

This quote seems remarkably prescient in anticipating the continuing spread of surveillance culture, a framework which has in turn structured a number of analyses of *Big Brother*. There is also a sense here in which, just as Lasch insisted upon the highly instinctive manner in which the self internalizes mediation ('we need no reminder to smile'), so *Big Brother* is implicated in naturalizing – or even welcoming – an ethos of social surveillance, and the power relations in which this takes place. There are

two key points to make about reality TV in this respect, and particularly the formats that are my focus here. Firstly, the programmes and the participants remain quite self-consciously fascinated by how various forms of mediation, and forms of media, act as an interface between performers and viewers, whether this refers to the construction of the programme itself (how are we being edited?), the use of television within the show, or the relations between television and the internet. This interface is invoked in various ways depending on the context. It is certainly imagined as a distorting force, but it is also positioned as a source of privileged 'truth' and revelation, or as a conduit which facilitates a transparent and immediate connection between audience and screen. Clearly, the idea of mediation, as well as a physical and/or temporal separation between performance and audience, is germane to the entire history of mass-mediated performances, with the mediation exercised by institutions variously imagined as taking the form of a 'window, an interpreter, a platform, an interactive link, a signpost, a filter, a mirror . . . or barrier'.[18] But what is less entrenched is the use of the media – here television – as a form of self-validation. Reality TV certainly caters to a desire to be watched by others and to have one's identity validated by this process. But there is a contradiction here as this utterly depends on mediation: self-realization is founded on a contradictory framework in which self has in part become a public property – an entity to be written, fashioned and then judged by strangers. I say 'in part' because the mediated self is explicitly imagined as a site of contest here: its meanings are struggled over between participants, producers and viewers, and thus played out as less naturalized and secure than the arguments above may suggest. The overriding point is that this fascination also renders the mediation of the self *strange* – placing it on the agenda for interrogation and scrutiny by participants and viewers.

18 See Abercrombie and Longhurst on this history in *Audiences*, pp. 57–68.

My second point is that it is precisely this interface which problematizes the easy blurring of 'performing' and 'audiencing' described by Abercrombie and Longhurst. While they hold up their work as the origins of a new 'paradigm' in audience studies, it paradoxically seems to work better for performances that are *not* mediated – where audience and performer occupy the same physical space. With respect to my focus here, it is precisely the mediated nature of the framework that complicates any easy blurring of these roles. While Abercrombie and Longhurst acknowledge that power is not 'the central element' in their paradigm,[19] they sometimes write as if it had simply disappeared. There is little sense of the constraints under which both 'audiencing' and 'performing' occur, and the way in which the boundary between the two remains subject to regulation. With this in mind, my analysis now considers how discourses on selfhood, participation and the boundaries between performing and viewing are inextricably intertwined. Moving from *Big Brother* to *Eden*, I explore how this is played out across a continuum of relations in which performers and viewers are initially imagined as distant and separate, until they are brought closer and closer together.

19 Ibid., p. 97.

There are effectively three audiences in *Big Brother*: the contestants form an audience for each other in the house, they are then observed by the television audience, and there is the live audience on eviction nights which appears as a crowd onscreen. The contestants have first-hand knowledge of each other's performances, while the viewer has only second-hand knowledge. But the home audience also has the impression of a more omnipotent perspective: with the house constructed to encourage duplicity and the playing of multiple roles, the contestants are not privy to what occurs in the 'backstage' space of the diary room. Goffman defines the back region or backstage as a space in which the impression 'fostered by the performance [at the front] is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course',[20] and, rather intriguingly in relation to *Big Brother*, this is 'often located at one end of the place where the performance is presented, being cut off from it by a partition and guarded passageway'.[21] Some contestants use the diary room in ways which explicitly contradict their face-to-face interaction with other contestants ('He is dreadful . . . I cannot *stand* him!'), while it also solicits other forms of performance, from the openly comedic to the confessional. Although the notion of a 'natural movement back and forth between cynicism and sincerity'[22] does suggest a constant renegotiation of performative frames, there is no space for the housemates to go 'backstage' from the home viewers. While Goffman discusses how members of a team (in the retail trade, for example) go 'backstage' to 'derogate the audience' in ways inconsistent with face-to-face treatment,[23] this is necessarily seen by the viewer of *Big Brother*.

In reality TV, ideas about distance, separation and contact – and the power relations they bring into play – are utilized and exploited as themes through which participation unfolds. In *Big Brother*, the construction of an isolated environment works under the logic that it can force out 'true' selves in the 'pure' environment of the house. It also aims to protect the claim to display 'real' and 'ordinary' people who have not been touched by the media world – even while they are immediately the subject of insatiable media attention in the public sphere. This structure is notably different to shows such as *Eden* or *The Salon* in which viewers' perceptions of the participants can infiltrate the series via web forums, which are then accessed by participants during the series' run. Given that we witness participants in these programmes discussing or logging onto the web forums, a sense of audience power emerges from seeing the apparent erosion of boundaries between viewer and programme, not to mention the considerable onscreen tension such intervention can cause. Audience power emerges from the opposite effect in *Big Brother:* a sense of viewer omnipotence is engendered precisely by the contestants' *lack* of knowledge about how they are being received.

This power is played out explicitly on eviction nights, when the onscreen presence of the live audience can be seen and heard. The sound of the live audience is imagined by the contestants to represent the wider

20 Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, p. 114.

21 Ibid., p. 115.

22 Ibid., p. 31.

23 Ibid, p. 168.

(absent) audience response, and it is eagerly anticipated and carefully scrutinized. Tantalizingly kept in physical proximity to the crowd, the contestants strain to hear the response to the latest evictee – desperate for an injection of 'live' reality into what they experience as their mediated, self-enclosed space. This is then swiftly cut short as Big Brother plays loud, simulated crowd noise into the house. The crowd noise is notably monotonous and relatively neutral, effectively overwhelming the sound of the actual crowd and its overt support or naked hostility that the housemates covet or fear. Rather than a transition from the highly mediated realm of the house to the 'real' world out there, the crowd noise also symbolically foregrounds how the contestants see their future success as dependent on a *mediated* form of sociality – about which they appear decidedly nervous and hesitant. From the housemates' perspective, the crowd offers potential clues to the success of their own performances, and indeed of the show as a whole. As contestant (and eventual winner) Anthony Hutton exclaimed in 2005, after evictee Maxwell Ward received a hostile reception from the crowd: 'What *do* you have to do to get a cheer? What *do* you have to do? Is [the show] . . . not going well, do you think?' Another housemate then responds: 'Well we know the truth [about us], that's what matters'. The rather desperate bid to decipher the enigmatic sign of external judgement suggests otherwise, and this split between inside and outside is a recurrent theme in the show. In the fifth series of *Big Brother*, when contestant Vanessa Nimmo is evicted, fellow housemate Shell Jubin is visibly upset upon overhearing the negative reaction Vanessa receives from the crowd. Running into the house, as she tries to stifle her sobs, she shouts: 'How can they do that? What kind of people do that? It's horrible, *horrible.* . . . I can't understand it – the crowd *and* the audience [voting]. Why? She doesn't deserve that.'[24]

24 *Big Brother,* 21 June 2004.

John Hartley has observed how *Big Brother* participants have to come out of the house to find out what they 'mean' (or who they 'are'). In discussing the Australian *Big Brother* contestant Katrina Miani, Hartley notes how Katrina 'very clearly meant what her viewers – including journalists . . . bloggers and voting viewers – said she did', and that her 'own sense of reality had almost no bearing on how she was presented and received'.[25] For Hartley, this exemplifies what he calls the changing 'value chain' of meaning. In premodern times, the source of meaning was sought in the unarguable site of authorial intention, in modern times it was accessed in 'the text', while in the contemporary era the 'source of meaning has drifted to the other end of the value chain', residing in the audience/reader:

25 Hartley, 'Kiss Me Kat: Shakespeare, *Big Brother* and the taming of the self', in Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (eds), *Reality TV: Re-making Televison Culture* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004), pp. 318.

> Given the anonymous popular sovereignty of mass democracy, this is an egalitarian approach to meaning. It requires large-scale sampling and ethnographic methods to get at what a text means because it means what several million people say it does. The way to find out is by poll,

survey, and sample. . . . One of its imaginative and ritualised forms is *Big Brother*.[26]

Hartley links this to his concept of a 'redactional culture' in which, with the proliferation of meaning sites, 'the creation of meaning is no longer an authorial act, it's now an editorial one'.[27] In emphasizing how all sources of meaning include interpretation – and that these sources have proliferated in the contemporary media age – Hartley does capture the sense of powerlessness articulated by the housemates in relation to their media selves. But whether conceived as an authorial or 'redactional' act, the emphasis on textual dispersal, and its relationship with audience agency, still downplays the framing of the self at the level of production: the role of the programme editors and producers in shaping the public perception of the housemates' identities.

The discussions and speculations between the housemates show an awareness first and foremost of their construction by the programme, and only then how their image may be interpreted by viewers. As the series have progressed, contestants have exhibited an acute awareness of the conventions of the format, as well as the wider popular debate surrounding reality TV. Internalizing popular criticism of the form, housemates discuss how their representation will likely be shaped by a taxonomy of social/media 'types' – the implications of which they understand largely in negative terms. In the judging of the self and others, aspects such as class, sexuality, education, dress style, ambitions and social interaction come under close and constant scrutiny (even if this process is less explicit than in makeover TV). The contestants in the fifth series of *Big Brother* displayed an acute awareness of this gaze. Contestant Shell commented: 'I fully expected that people [at home] may react to my accent. I'll be seen as the "posh" one, and that will carry certain associations I think.' Vanessa suggested when facing the public vote for eviction: 'People, or women at least, will just see me as the "pretty blonde", and that won't be popular. They'll be like, "vote her out".'[28] In response, fellow housemate Dan retorts: 'But we're *all* in that situation in some way. I'll probably go [out] as I'm miserable. I'm not running around "being" the "gay hairdresser" [I was recruited for] am I?'

Such conversations bring out quite starkly how we *all* perceive ourselves to inhabit particular subjectivities, which are here articulated as being magnified to particular effect. If *Big Brother* can be compared to a form of micro-community, then the inhabitants seem fully cognisant that they are to be classified and categorized. Certainly, such self-reflexivity may raise interesting issues for audience-reading strategies, potentially functioning, in part, to undermine, subvert or deconstruct the creation of character types as they unfold. But in discursive terms, the viewing audience is spoken of as relatively passive – apparently largely unaware of the partial nature of media representation, and aligned with the dominant ideological values which structure it. The audience is invoked as 'mass' in every sense: distant, homogenous and passive.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid, p. 319.

28 *Big Brother*, tx 15 June 2004.

In this sense it is pertinent that the 2004 *Big Brother* also explored the opposite end of this spectrum: it became famous for displaying the consequences of immediate and direct judgement – visceral, uncontrolled and explosive. This emerged when *Big Brother* deliberately played with the onscreen relations between performing and viewing, creating an onscreen explosion that was difficult to contain.

On 17 June 2004, three weeks into the fifth UK *Big Brother*, a double eviction was announced. However, whilst contestants Michelle Bass and Emma Greenwood were apparently ejected by the viewer vote, they did not exit the doors as normal but were ushered into a secret room adjacent to the house: the *Big Brother* 'bedsit'. Unbeknownst to the other housemates, the girls would live sequestered in the bedsit for five days, observing the events in the house as viewers. Donning headphones and watching a plasma screen, Emma and Michelle had access to a live feed which monitored the house. While the physical proximity between the housemates and the hideaway was integral to the manufacture of tension, every effort was made to mark the bedsit off as an autonomous and self-contained space – essentially another 'world'. In comparison to the futuristic, minimalist and open-plan living space of the house, structured to facilitate observation and surveillance, the bedsit was decorated in what the producers conceived as '1960s bedsit chic'. Unlike the trendy minimalism of the house, the cramped bedsit sported patterned brown wallpaper and a candlewick bedspread, as well as what were intended to be 'tasteless' lamps and accoutrements. In marking the room off as a different spatial and temporal zone, presenter McCall confirms for the viewer in one edition that 'it even smells musty'.[29]

29 *Big Brother,* tx 11 June 2004.

While Emma and Michelle understood this to be a highly performative space (one of their first actions involved stripping topless and spraying cream on their breasts), they were also clearly positioned as *viewers.* A key part of viewers' interest, pleasure and entertainment was to come from watching Emma and Michelle watching the house. On one level, this was a fascinating and explicit image of the performance of participation: they were set up to perform the viewing audience's relations with the show – specifically the ideal of a completely immersive and intense investment which broadcasters are keen to cultivate. One of the most memorable sequences in this respect shows Emma and Michelle lying on the double bed under the night-vision camera, watching a moment of passion unfold between Jason and Vanessa. For some time this moment carries on unseen by the other housemates in the house, thereby accentuating the notion of a voyeuristic, private viewing. As the burly Jason sweeps Vanessa quite literally off her feet, the girls immediately vocalize their judgement on the situation with a sense of urgent excitement:

> Michelle: Watch, watch as [his] . . . hands slowly move down [her . . . back] – *told* you!
> Emma: All he wants is to use you [Vanessa]. If you go with him you're

weak, you're *weak.* Look, you can see the falseness of him!
Michelle: No way! She is going for it. Oh my god – will someone else see [them] . . .?
Emma: Shhh, you're missing it.[30]

30 *Big Brother,* tx 14 June 2004.

As the girls lie in bed, shouting, giggling and predicting the narrative arc, they mimic a form of intense and gossipy engagement traditionally associated with soap opera. Just in case we had missed the point that they were performing 'our' relations with *Big Brother*, McCall later confirms in an interview with Emma: 'It was brilliant watching you in there. You were doing exactly what I do – in bed, talking to the screen. It was just *brilliant* watching you as a viewer.'[31]

31 *Big Brother,* tx 20 June 2004.

Importantly, for my purposes here, Emma and Michelle were also uniquely positioned, for unlike the actual home audience they could literally intervene in the text. Big Brother asked them to decide which housemate would repeatedly receive cold showers when they tried to wash (Victor), and they selected a prank in which a chilli-chocolate cake was given to the housemates at a party feast. As the cameras switch between the house and the bedsit, Emma and Michelle scream with laughter at Victor's annoyance ('Big Brother I am going to get ill with a cold! It is not funny!'), and they shout at the screen ('no, no!') when housemate Marco (a close friend of the girls) takes an unsuspecting bite of the spicy cake. But Emma and Michelle were not 'ordinary' viewers, and part of their intense engagement with the text stemmed from their own roles within it. Tension, humour and drama were specifically fostered by scenes in which the girls witnessed other housemates talking about them. As Jason tells Vanessa in the seduction sequence: 'They went because they were boring – what you see is what you get. There is nothing there.' Michelle was significant here in that she had previously developed a romantic involvement with housemate Stuart. As she viewed him onscreen, his relations with other female housemates were constantly subject to her detailed scrutiny.

While the bedsit sequences seemingly portrayed Emma and Michelle as the viewers' representatives, wielding power over the ignorant housemates, they offered the most striking image of how limited viewer participation is. On one evening the housemates stripped off and jumped into the outdoor Jacuzzi:

Michelle: What? What are they doing? I don't *want* them to be naked in the jacuzzi. [Pauses and looks upset]. But they are just in there . . . [looks toward the door].
Emma: Why not? What's wrong?
Michelle: Because – *because* then they'll be naked in the jacuzzi! [Then very loudly at the screen] NO – NAKED – JACUZZI-NESS!'

Although Michelle gestures towards her physical proximity to Stuart, she is quite powerless to intervene. Inhabiting a separate spatial and social space, Michelle is now also a viewer – a role she soon realizes is

extraordinarily constrained. In fact, she immediately tells Emma in defiance, 'We *need* to go right back in there'. As she shouts at the screen, with traces of humour turning to panic and distress, the camera zooms in for a closeup of her face as the jacuzzi 'action' continues to unfold on the plasma screen. The dramatic reaction to the strategically chosen footage also foregrounds how – as with home viewers – the girls only have access to whatever Big Brother *chooses* they can watch. Perhaps more significantly, Michelle's distress and the 'no naked jacuzzi-ness' image was shown repeatedly in eviction interviews, as well as in the finale highlights from the show. Indeed, it was to become a key aspect of Michelle's 'bunny boiler' image – what the programme and the press constructed as her 'obsessive' and domineering interest in Stuart.

The bedsit experiment ultimately ignited what became one of the most controversial incidents in the history of the UK *Big Brother* (until the *Celebrity Big Brother* 'race' row involving Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty in 2007). After listening to derogatory comments about themselves, Emma and Michelle reentered the house, spectacularly appearing from beneath silver serving domes at a special dinner party. Their reentrance prompted an escalating series of fights – the party had been liberally plied with alcohol – and press critics described how 'shocked viewers watched as furniture was overturned and one contestant threatened to kill another housemate before Channel 4 bosses pulled the plug on the live footage of the show'.[32] It was reported that security guards entered the house and that the police were 'investigating' the incidents. Channel 4 admitted that the show had reached an 'unacceptable level of conflict', and the events explicitly reignited the debates around the ethics of the show. Common to many discussions was the emphasis on the passivity of the participants – duped, exploited and manipulated by careless, ratings-hungry broadcasters – combined with a visible class distaste for the housemates. As psychologist Cynthia McVey observed: 'The housemates have been manipulated beautifully and it has almost been too successful. . . . If you put animals in a confined space then you will get aggressive behaviour.'[33] In fact, this distaste also spoke to the perceived absence of an appropriate physical, spatial and social distance between 'viewers' and performers here. There is clearly a long history of attempts to control the 'riotous behaviour of the working class' with the 'sedate passivity' of middle-class modes of engagement.[34] *Big Brother* of course explicitly attempts to blur the social distance between performers/viewers in its claim to the 'ordinary' and the demotic, but the physical and spatial barriers remain common to mass-mediated performances. In this respect, if Emma and Michelle are conceived as 'viewers', the violent spectacle seemed to provide (from the perspective above) a momentary flash of what it might be like to let the audience 'in'.

Of significance here is that the 'combustible combination waiting to happen'[35] was enacted through a play with the roles of viewing and performing within the show. It was not that Emma and Michelle had witnessed both 'front' and 'backstage' performances to which they

32 John Plunkett, '*Big Brother* violence no surprise, says psychologist', *The Guardian*, 18 June 2004.

33 Ibid.

34 Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*, p. 51.

35 Plunkett, '*Big Brother* violence no surprise'.

would not usually have access – they had not been privy to diary room footage. However, they had witnessed others discussing them, comments they may not have witnessed if they had remained in the house. The other contestants had clearly assumed that they had access to this footage, as they thought Emma and Michelle were now viewing the show in the outside world. But this was precisely the point: Emma and Michelle had seen the footage and they were coming back *in*. Thus, tensions arose from a bid to manipulate the temporal articulation of judgement and feedback on performances in the show. The temporal and spatial relations which regulate how contestants witness judgement on their own performances, and how they then pass judgement on the performances of others, were disrupted. The housemates fully expected Emma and Michelle to react to the footage (they perhaps imagined that they were giving comment in the press and magazines), but they did not expect them to re-enter the reality space to express this. While housemates do desire external feedback from the viewing audience (which is perceived as too abstract when it arrives), here the internal/external feedback was too proximate, immediate and direct.

Overall, the bedsit incident was significant for providing a fascinating and unique insight into the contradictions that structure the wider performance of participation in the show. The events were precipitated, first and foremost, by the desire to interweave discourses of viewer power into the programme. Viewers at home may not have *been* Emma and Michelle, but in terms of hierarchies of knowledge and narrative perspective, they were certainly aligned with them. Yet this ended up accentuating, on one level, the extraordinarily constrained scope of participatory viewing, and the highly delimited agency of the participants. To be sure, the incident successfully acted as publicity for the programme, increasing ratings and the general 'event' status of the format, and while cutting the live feed foregrounded the limits of live and 'transparent' access, the incident simultaneously confirmed the claim to offer 'raw', spontaneous interaction. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement that it was all 'almost . . . too successful',[36] suggests an awareness that the producers were playing with fire, dramatizing power relations (between viewer and screen, participants and producers) which they were ultimately unable to control.

36 Ibid.

Although the bedsit scenario emphasized the limited agency of performers *and* viewers, unlike Emma and Michelle, home viewers do not usually have the opportunity to decide that they want to walk into the text and assume a role. However, in other programmes such as *Eden* and *The Salon*, the audience is solicited to 'be' the text, to traverse the boundary between viewer/performer, as the narrative unfolds. In *Eden* you can enter as a marooned 'Edenite' and live in the rainforest, and in *The Salon* you can 'book an appointment' for a haircut or beauty treatment, becoming one of the 'stars' of the next show.

My primary focus here is *Eden*, a youth-orientated programme screened in 2002 on Channel 4 (UK). Stripped weekdays at 6.00 pm, the

series was scheduled to catch the pre-*Hollyoaks* audience (the channel's teen soap which is broadcast at 6.30 pm). The producers, RDF Media (which also created the formats *Faking It* and *Wife Swap*), marketed *Eden* as 'the most interactive reality programme yet conceived'.[37] Exploiting a deliberate juxtaposition of the 'primitive' and the technological, the show's website explained how:

> A group of people in their early 20s have 3 months to build a community in a piece of virgin Australian rainforest. Their only contact with the outside world is via discussion forums on the show's website. Major decisions in the community have to be approved by viewers via a phone and web vote.[38]

Viewers could log on to the internet forum which was accessed by the participants themselves, and they also voted to shape the trajectory of camp life. This involved deciding on who should be Camp Leader for the week, or influencing the distribution of tasks, provisions, punishments and treats. (In fact, some of these decisions were not dissimilar in scope and function to the privileges afforded Emma and Michelle in *Big Brother*.) The audience was also solicited to vote (via telephone or internet) a new contestant into camp each week, selected from three potential participants chosen by the producers. Thus the community expanded rather than diminished as the show progressed. They were no regular evictions until the end, at which point viewers voted for who was to win the £10,000 prize.

Eden was explicitly interested in exploring how the consequences of a participatory feedback 'loop' between contestants and viewers could affect the show in a number of different ways. In relaying decisions about camp leadership or tasks, *Eden* certainly drew upon the now conventional method for registering audience intervention in reality TV, the voting percentage. This aggregation conceives of the audience as a 'bulk, agglomeration created by statistical research',[39] yet at a textual level *Eden* was also interested in introducing the presence of individual 'viewers'. Although now a ubiquitous presence on many television web forums, viewers' responses to television shows still occupy a marginal role on British television – largely appearing on designated programmes such as the BBC's long-running *Points of View.* Thus, part of the novelty of *Eden* was being able to see comments from 'real' viewers enter the onscreen space.

Much was made in the programme of the 'Edenites' entering the 'webhut' to log on to the forum every other day. These scenes always fostered a sense of excitement, as this was the Edenites only contact with the outside world, but there was equally a sense of trepidation, as they never knew what the web discourse would bring. In this sense, there was an attempt to foster a sense of viewer agency by foregrounding comments which exploited the omnipotent perspective of the home audience. As in *Big Brother*, we had access to 'front' and 'backstage' performances via 'hutcam' – *Eden*'s version of the diary room. The

37 RDF Media Features. URL: http://www.rdfmedia.com [accessed 12 February 2003].

38 Ibid.

39 John Ellis, 'Channel 4 working notes', *Screen*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1983), p. 49.

Edenites would receive e-mails which informed them of 'backstage' performances in camp, calling into question the sincerity of the friendships they had made. Needless to say, the result of this was invariably conflict between camp members, general upset and disruption. The selected interventions were strategic, and it was unclear how information actually filtered through to the participants.

The clearest focus of tension and struggle emerged from viewer comments judging individual performances. On one occasion, Edenite Chris receives an e-mail in which he is bluntly informed that his onscreen self is 'boring'. The camera moves down to the computer screen, looking over Chris's shoulder as he reads out the e-mail: 'Chris. I am watching the show all the time, and I find myself wondering why you are there. You do nothing – you're boring. Dull, dull *dull.* If you do anything it is whinge and complain.'[40] Upset and angry, Chris leaves the webhut and retreats back to the camp base. He then goes immediately to hutcam to refute the perspective offered by the viewer. Furthermore, and in apparent response to these criticisms, in the Edentites' 'Superhero' task the next day, Chris boisterously grabs a turquoise lycra outfit and becomes 'Captain Camp Man'. Chris's apparent willingness to reflect on and adapt his performance returns us to ideas about self-monitoring and self-surveillance, and not least the emphasis on the external 'authoring' of the self.

40 23 March 2002.

In his article 'Here's looking at you: reality TV, *Big Brother* and Foucault', James Wong argues that Foucault's conception of surveillance has too often been interpreted as a form of 'top-down' power. The other half of the story is that 'we are the ones who are exercising power over ourselves. We are our own masters, and that idea is central to the conception of autonomous agency.'[41] In other words, we act upon the self because we want to mould ourselves in response to the 'normalizing' rhetoric of surveillance. While this may be the case (and Chris certainly seems willing), in the *Eden* scenario we see these mechanisms in process, and they offer a far from convincing image of 'autonomous agency'.

41 James Wong, 'Here's looking at you: reality TV, *Big Brother* and Foucault', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, no. 26 (2001), p. 33.

Yet Chris walks a precarious tightrope: in his desire to present a telegenic and pleasing performance and court the favour of the bloggers/viewers, he threatens to dismiss the value placed upon the authentic 'core' self in reality TV. Indeed, Chris is later accused by fellow Edenite Becky of just such a move: 'You got an e-mail about being really boring and like *that* [clicks her fingers] – you were jumping around and being really noisy. If anyone can complain about people "performing" for the cameras Chris, it isn't you.' Chris's performance of an apparently 'inauthentic' persona is not only read as compromising the integrity of his identity in camp, it also leads to a further loss of control over how his identity is interpreted by viewers. Following the entrance of a gay US contestant called Lee, the Edenites receive e-mails speculating on Chris's sexuality, largely because (as one blogger writes) 'that Captain Camp thing was surely a cry for help!'. As an apparently straight, middle-class white male, he finds himself associated with a more marginalized

identity which, far from offering a form of self-validation, is experienced as uncomfortable and unwelcome. Thus, the mediating frame again emerges as a source of tension and struggle (as well as potential distortion), as it connects the relations between performers and interactive viewers.

Finally, there is the ultimate form of viewer participation in *Eden*: the offer to step into the text as it unfolds. This is not merely an invitation to enter the narrative, but also to *change* it. As Couldry has explained, the difference between media performer and viewer emerges not from actual reality, as from the drawing of a symbolic boundary of distinction or value. This refers to what Couldry has influentially theorized as the 'media/ordinary' hierarchy in which it 'is "common sense" that the "media world" is somehow better, more intense, than "ordinary life", and that "media people" are . . . special'.[42] This hierarchy functions to sustain the authority of media representation and it clearly confirms the idea that to appear on television is to assume a form of cultural capital in contemporary society. Couldry argues that reality TV has not fundamentally challenged the media/ordinary hierarchy he outlines, indeed, it offers a ritual reinforcement. His argument is valuable here precisely because it retains a focus on the power relations in which these performances take place, while also questioning the utopian assumption that the relationship between viewing and performing is easily blurred. While Couldry's paradigm may seem to function at a 'macro' level, he also observes that 'it is through local practices that [the media/ordinary hierarchy] . . . is reproduced'.[43] As a result, there is always the possibility that it can be subverted and challenged, and he fully acknowledges the existence of actions which can disrupt the symbolic hierarchy of the media frame. Reality TV thus offers its own possibilities for 'performance disruptions'.[44]

Unlike *Big Brother* or *Pop Idol*, people were joining *Eden* after they had been using the web forum and viewing the very series in which they were to appear, creating a peculiarly intense situation in which these individuals had specific kinds of knowledge of, and investments in, the programme. This intensity and investment reaches its height towards the end of *Eden* when the last person to join the community, '24-year-old Jo from Bradford', arrives in camp. As she travels to the site by car, the voiceover explains: 'Jo won't be watching the Edenites on telly today – she'll be joining them'.[45] Viewing is swiftly positioned as part of the mundanity of everyday life, while Jo's Australian adventure is exciting and special. But although this narrates Jo's trajectory from audience to participant and from living room to screen, it also foregrounds her previous consumption of the programme. Far more so than any of the other late arrivals, Jo was constructed as occupying a very ambivalent status as contestant, participant and general camp member, precisely because of her previous (and more entrenched) status as a viewer.

At this stage Jo's association with the remaining home viewers is used explicitly to foreground her agency. Introducing Jo as 'the executioner', the voiceover explains how she is to be given the unexpected task of

42 Couldry, *The Place of Media Power*, p. 45.

43 Ibid., p. 155.

44 Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, p. 236.

45 *Eden*, tx 23 March 2002.

nominating three people for eviction (after which a viewer vote will determine which two will go). As Jo makes the remaining journey to the camp on foot, she talks to the camera about her perceptions of the contestants from watching *Eden*. Her role as the 'executioner' functions to anchor and emphasize her intervention and power: 'Oh god – Westley. Now *where* do I start? All I want to say is watch yourself Westley. . . . As for Lily – she thinks she has [winning] . . . in the bag, but we'll see.' After Jo has arrived in camp and revealed the outcome of her task (Lily, Lucy and Westley will be nominated), she receives an extremely hostile reception from the other Edenites. Upset and angry, they attempt to console themselves by rationalizing the basis on which Jo's judgements were made. Contestants Chris and Westley discuss the intervention together in the hutcam, while Becky enters after them to reflect on the same topic:

> Chris: This is particularly tricky as it's *one* viewer's perception, one viewer's likes and dislikes of people, and it's not like a collective opinion.
> Westley: With Jo, let's not take it personally though. She doesn't know us. She only knows us from the show.[46]
> Becky: I feel a bit silly about what people at home will feel – seeing me in tears. I mean, Jo's a prime example [of that]. [She clearly thinks] 'it's light entertainment – get over it'. But this [response], it just simply doesn't understand the experience we have had.

46 *Eden*, tx 23 March 2002.

With Jo's jubilant sense of power somewhat short-lived, these exchanges all position her as a viewer – and thus one positioned lower in the hierarchy of the media frame which they now all inhabit. Chris expresses his concern about the potentially anti-democratic implications of the decision which, he suggests, he would have found easier to accept if it had emerged from the weight of absent 'mass' opinion. In comparison, Becky acknowledges a general perception of reality TV's 'frivolous' nature ('it's just entertainment'), but only to shore up her personal experience – her 'reality' – as being more authoritative. Jo cannot participate in or 'know' this experience as she is too late, and the other contestants will not let her 'in'. While the implicit hierarchy here elevates the mediated space above the viewing space, and thus the participants over the viewers, there is clearly a paradox. The space is 'special' *because* it is mediated, but this process is simultaneously represented as an obstacle to the viewers gaining access to the 'real', which somehow remains exclusive to the participants.

When repeatedly asked to justify the judgements she made about the other participants, Jo ultimately recants:

> I don't know – you're just characters. . . . Like I said before, I realize now that I was *just a viewer* who had seen you on TV for two months. I can't claim any more than that. I thought I knew you, but I didn't. Frankly, though, after spending time here [the camera zooms in for a

closeup of Jo's tear-stained and blotchy red face] I don't want to [know you].[47]

47 *Eden*, tx 23 March, 2002.

The issue of power and hierarchy could not be more evident here in so far as she is significantly forced (perhaps bullied) to accept a subordinate status as '*just* a viewer'. It is also worth emphasizing that Jo does not 'fit' the camp dynamic in other ways: she does not sport a model figure and is never seen in skimpy swimwear like the other girls. Her physical appearance, as well as her broad northern accent, function to accentuate her as not 'special' but as ordinary.

Nevertheless, such self-reflexive musings on the differences between viewing and entering the text do demonstrate the potentially subversive implications of inviting the audience in. First, to have someone 'in' the text, looking down the barrel of the camera, and quite nakedly embodying the difference between the mediated and the 'real' *Eden*, has a more powerful impact than my description here can evoke. Second, while Jo seems to accept that she is 'merely ordinary', on another level she highlights the television frame as a form of distorted mirror which actively assigns her this status. If she contests the 'magic' of the media space ('Eden?' she says, 'this ain't no paradise'), then this hierarchy is necessarily put under pressure as the mediated space is no longer deemed 'special'. Third, the illusion of intimacy, and particularly the insistence on a shared connection between participants and viewers, is exposed as just that – an illusion, fostered by the aesthetic form of reality TV and television's modes of direct address. Clearly, the apparent aim of *Eden* was to position Jo as powerful. The task she was set was designed to ensure she played a decisive role in determining the outcome of the game. (In fact it resulted in the eviction of popular contestant Lily, who had been the favourite to win the competition and had previously been voted 'most likely to win' in an earlier poll.) The programme therefore attempted to create an intensified, interactive relationship between viewer and screen and made visible the dynamic of the 'viewer' crashing in on the parameters of narrative action. Ironically, in this instance, the 'viewer' – Jo – is rejected, isolated and marginalized, while the contestants find more than ever that they do not own the production of their media selves. There is certainly a kind of 'authorial', or producer-led, intervention here: 'The Gods of Eden' activated the twist at the point in the narrative when it would ensure maximum dramatic impact (in which sense it was undoubtedly a success). Yet as a result of this desire to make audience agency visible, the authority of the media frame is potentially called into question. If the desire is to beckon the viewer into the television space, then Jo provides a momentary, and highly charged, questioning as to why viewers might want to enter at all.

The qualities and various forms of participation in reality TV are inextricably intertwined with the discursive construction of identity in

reality TV, and I have suggested how this unfolds through a self-conscious negotiation of the relations between performing and viewing (which are not as easily blurred as some suggest). The opportunity for physical intervention does not in itself reshape the power relations which structure the production of the audience, and this is why the idea of a performance of participation is so central: it offers a more complex and contradictory route through which to explore ideas of agency and power. In line with Foucauldian conceptions of agency, power is not so much possessed here as existing in relations – moving between producers, participants and viewers in a process of ongoing struggle. My analysis has not suggested that this power flow is always fluid or equally distributed, nonetheless, it is precisely the desire to play out this circuit which brings (from the perspective of audience studies) the more exciting possibilities of participation into focus. Television is keen to insist that 'the producers have relinquished some measure of control . . . [and] that the audience has *gained* it'.[48] But once articulated, this promise may twist and turn in ways which, like any performance, can be unpredictable and powerful, and leave the audience wanting more.

48 Andrejevic, *Reality TV: the Work of Being Watched*, p. 7 (emphasis in original).

The television personality system: televisual stardom revisited after film theory

JAMES BENNETT

In John Langer's 1981 essay 'Television's personality system' he asserts:

> . . . whereas stars emanate as idealizations or archetypal expressions, to be contemplated, revered, desired and even blatantly imitated, stubbornly standing outside the realms of the familiar and the routinized, personalities are distinguished for their representativeness, their typicality, the 'will to ordinariness' to be accepted, normalized, experienced as *familiar*.[1]

Writing recently about television stardom, Deborah Jermyn uses this same passage to challenge the way in which stardom in film and television has largely been conceived in stark binary terms.[2] As Jermyn explains, this dichotomy stems from John Ellis's arguments regarding the importance of cinema's 'photo effect' in constructing stars. That is, for Ellis it is through the photo effect that cinema induces a 'present absence' in the experience of cinema, which in turn plays a central role in stars' simultaneous extraordinariness and ordinariness. Jermyn goes on to assert that it now 'seems indisputable that this status has been conferred by television', drawing on the example of Sarah Jessica Parker.[3] Unlike Jermyn, it is not my purpose here to call into question the way in which 'stardom proper' has been restricted to the cinema. Instead, I am interested in paying close attention to, and delineating more clearly, that category of performer we might term the 'television personality'.

For Jermyn, what seems to rankle about Ellis's and Langer's arguments is the contention that television produces personalities rather

1 John Langer (1981), 'Television's personality system', in Tim O'Sullivan and Yvonne Jewkes (eds), *The Media Studies Reader* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 165–7.

2 Deborah Jermyn, 'Bringing out the star in you? SJP, Carrie Bradshaw and the evolution of television stardom?', in Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (eds), *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 96–117.

3 John Ellis, 'Stars as a cinematic phenomenon', in Jeremy Butler (ed.), *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television* (Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press, 1991), p. 313.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn003

than stars, and that these personalities are simply ordinary. Here we might understand, as Frances Bonner does, such ordinariness in terms of the routine and repetitive nature of the television personality's appearance on television; qualities that Henri Lefebvre has argued are part of a negatively valued 'everyday life'.[4] It is instructive here to dwell briefly on how this notion of ordinariness has informed our understanding of the television personality, and why its negative connotations are resisted by Jermyn. Her work, like Andy Medhurst's on Gilbert Harding before it, demonstrates that the television personality is capable of achieving the kind of intertextual coverage assumed to be the preserve of stars.[5] Medhurst argues that Harding's appearances as a straight-talking and often rude panelist on *What's My Line?* (BBC, 1950-67) in the 1950s had made him Britain's 'first unequivocal media personality'. As with Jermyn's analysis of the intertextual coverage of Sarah Jessica Parker, Medhurst finds that the extent and kind of media coverage that accompanied and built Harding's fame must therefore fit Ellis's 'basic definition of a star as a "performer in a particular medium whose figure enters into subsidiary forms of circulation and then feeds back into future performances"'. However, whilst Jermyn therefore suggests that 'some of the differences that were once held to exist between TV "personalities" and cinematic stars have been eroded', Medhurst finds that 'something pulls me back from calling [Harding] a star'. That 'something' turns out to be precisely the present absence of the cinema Ellis enunciates as central in defining a star's extraordinariness. As Medhurst goes on to articulate, 'film stars have an aura of mystery, of other-worldliness, of sexual desirability, that is enhanced by the size of the screen and the darkness of the cinema'.[6] As a consequence we can understand, as Jermyn's argument does, that the use of the term 'television personality' within television studies signifies a 'lack', a quality absent from the television apparatus.

Whilst Jermyn's work largely concerns itself with challenging this relationship of superiority/inferiority, I am concerned here to develop an approach to televisual fame that 'retains a sense of distinctiveness of each medium'.[7] I want to do this by largely leaving aside the category of stardom, and thinking about the television personality in terms of fame, performance style and the wider cultural meanings to which we might pay attention once we examine their ordinariness, authenticity and 'just-as-they-are-ness' more closely. Thus, in this essay I propose to think about television personalities' appearance on screen as performances – 'Cilla Black' or 'Alan Titchmarsh' as opposed to simply Cilla Black or Alan Titchmarsh. However, I want to first consider some qualities of the types of performers categorized as 'television personalities', distinguishing this category from the kinds of 'TV stars' that Jermyn discusses. I shall then make a distinction between *televisually* skilled and *vocationally* skilled performers, exploring each category through a particular case study to examine notions of authenticity, ordinariness and performance and, in turn, evaluating how their apparently ordinary

4 Discussed in Frances Bonner, *Ordinary Television* (London: Sage, 2003), p. 30.

5 Andy Medhurst, 'Every wart and pustule: Gilbert Harding and television stardom', in John Corner (ed.), *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History* (London: British Film Institute, 1991), pp. 59–75.

6 Ibid., pp. 72–3.

7 Jermyn,'Bringing out the star', p. 87.

televisual image negotiates complex meanings surrounding gender and national identity. In so doing, I hope to show that whilst Graeme Turner may be right to suggest the separation between television personalities and stars remains a well caught distinction,[8] this does not mean that we should, as Ellis argues, understand television personalities as 'the opposite of stars, agreeable voids rather than sites of conflicting meanings'.[9] Thus I argue the importance of understanding the television personality's ordinariness and authenticity not in terms of a 'lack' in relation to the film star but precisely as a site of their economic, ideological, textual and cultural importance.

I have opened with a discussion of Jermyn's recent work on television personalities because it provides an important starting point for thinking about the kinds of fame circulated by television. Jermyn convincingly demonstrates that the subsidiary circulation of Sarah Jessica Parker's image does separate it from the character Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), and that such coverage does in fact extend the paradoxical, ordinary/extraordinary image of stardom to such performers. However the difficulty with her work, as with Ellis's and Langer's, is that it conflates the wide variety of performers on television into one category: the television personality. As such, these accounts seem to start from the presumption that television's regime of stardom should conform to that of film, defending or attacking television personalities against this measure. In particular they transpose Richard Dyer's analysis that stars play characters, that is, constructed representations of persons; a distinction that goes towards understanding the extraordinary/ordinary paradox of stardom.[10] However as Karen Lury has usefully suggested, we need to disentangle the categorization of television personality and television actor, whereby it is only the latter that can be understood through Dyer's presumption.[11] If we maintain such a distinction we find that, as Jermyn suggests, there is an increasing amount of press coverage that separates the 'real celebrity' from the 'star image': Sarah Jessica Parker from Carrie Bradshaw.

Jermyn may be correct to argue that performers such as Parker occupy a category of television stardom. Whether this is as new a notion as Jermyn suggests is something of a moot point as far as my argument here is concerned, but it is worth noting that Alexander Doty points to a similar form of televisual stardom apparent in Lucille Ball's movement between film and television screens during the 1940s and 1950s.[12] However, in thinking about this category of television star, I do not think it insignificant that both Parker's and Ball's careers started in film and moved back and forth between film and television. Indeed, whilst it may no longer be necessary for a career to start in film in order for stardom to be achieved by, or conferred upon, a performer, Jermyn's chosen examples of George Clooney, Jennifer Aniston and Gillian Anderson do suggest that the (successful) film appearance remains pivotal to 'stardom proper'.

8 Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (New York, NY and London: Sage, 2004), p. 15.

9 Ellis, 'Starts as a cinematic phenomenon'.

10 Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 89.

11 Karen Lury, 'Television performance: being, acting and "corpsing"', *New Formations*, no. 26 (1995), pp. 114–31.

12 Alexander Doty, 'The cabinet of Lucy Ricardo: Lucille Ball's star image', *Cinema Journal* vol. 29, no. 4 (1990), pp. 3–20.

However, what is apparent from this analysis is that the kinds of television stars Jermyn discusses remain distinct from most television actors and, more importantly, television personalities, who are more likely to remain nationally specific in their fame. The term 'television personality' is therefore restricted in three important senses. Firstly, in relation to the distinctions that frame star studies in film and television, the category of the television personality refers to those performers whose image enters into subsidiary circulation, such as appearances in magazines, newspapers, adverts and books (for example, 'how to' merchandising surrounding a vocational skill, such as gardening, DIY or cookery; or autobiographies and biographies; or, more rarely, exploits in fiction). In turn, such publicity, promotion and coverage should clearly feed back into the onscreen appearances. In this sense, the television personality can be defined as one who develops a 'televisual image', akin to the 'star image' of film theory that Dyer proposes.[13] Of course, because of the importance of authenticity and ordinariness, the confusion between the television personality-as-person and the televisual image is particularly pronounced.[14] Secondly, as Christine Geraghy has noted, television personalities' fame remains distinct from that of the 'celebrity', which 'indicates someone whose fame rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work and who is famous for having a lifestyle'. Geraghty goes on to suggest that television personalities belong to a category of 'professionals', 'whose fame rests on their work in such a way that there is very little sense of a private life and the emphasis is on the seamlessness of the public persona'.[15]

Geraghty's point about the seamlessness of the public persona is useful in the context of the final distinction I want to make: that is, between the television actor or star and the television personality. This final category consists of those performers who play themselves, making little distinction between onscreen and private personas: Jamie Oliver as 'Jamie Oliver', for instance. In this sense, the category of the television personality is essentially composed of presenters of various genres and formats: gameshow hosts, daytime magazine presenters, light entertainment performers and lifestyle programming presenters. On current British television, therefore, personalities such as Richard and Judy, Ant and Dec, and Alan Titchmarsh serve to exemplify these 'types' of television personality, and one can think of examples such as Oprah Winfrey and Eddie McGuire in different international contexts. However, these distinctions do not remain rigid and fixed. Rather, as Lury observes, the

> personality and the actor are . . . entangled, and individuals may oscillate from one position to another. The actor may perform as a celebrity when they guest on a game show, whereas the celebrity may act in a dramatic fiction. On top of this . . . the personality is always in some sense 'acting'.[16]

13 Dyer, *Stars*.

14 This search for the authentic celebrity is engaged with by Su Holmes, in her '"Off-guard, unkempt, unready?" Deconstructing contemporary celebrity in *heat m*agazine', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2005), pp. 21–38.

15 Christine Geraghty, 'Re-examining stardom: questions of texts, bodies and performance', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 187.

16 Lury, 'Television performance', p. 117.

I will return to this issue of acting below, but for now I shall concentrate on the particular kinds of performers subsumed within the term 'television personality' as defined here.

It seems an obvious point, but nevertheless one worth making, that not all presenters are the same and their presence on television is often predicated on the different talents they hold. The category contains a vast array of performers, which we need to account for and delineate if we wish to think about the meaning, pleasure and function of particular television personalities' image. There seems little point in comparing the performances of Delia Smith's or Jamie Oliver's cookery expositions with Graham Norton's camp naughtiness. Clearly, therefore, we must pay attention to questions of genre in undertaking such analyses, but a more extensive analysis might also engage with how the schedule differentiates types of television personality and modes of performance. I want to suggest that we can usefully distinguish between what I will call the televisually skilled performer and the vocationally skilled performer.

Televisually skilled performers are defined by the performers' *lack* of any skill, other than that of television presenting, that *informs* their performance – the content of the show is irrelevant to their 'real' life or any 'skills' they may hold therein. For example, *Blind Date* (LWT/ITV, 1985-2003) was not reliant on Cilla Black's (well-known) ability as a professional singer, but instead hinged upon her ability to 'present'. Indeed, drawing on Lury's arguments about television memory, Bonner suggests that Cilla's persona as a pop singer is only available to older audiences: 'for younger viewers of *Blind Date*, she has only ever been "mumsie"'.[17] This category is most easily understood in relation to performers who have presented or hosted a number of different programmes during their career. Predominantly, therefore, such televisually skilled presenters work within the broad genre of light entertainment. By contrast, the vocationally skilled performer appears on television as a result of, or is validated by, a skill that they hold as a professional within their chosen field: for instance, cookery, gardening, DIY or interior design. Consequently, this kind of performer is largely, but not exclusively, tied to the presentation of lifestyle programming. So we can see presenters such as Jamie Oliver, Ainsley Harriett or Alan Titchmarsh as vocationally skilled performers whose authenticity of character is tied inextricably to the credibility of their professed skill.

As I have suggested, just as with the distinction between actor and personality, the demarcation between performers is not fixed: performers such as Cilla (singing) and Graham Norton (comedy)[18] have both been vocational performers at different points in their career, whilst Alan Titchmarsh has fronted natural history programming and the BBC's annual coverage of the Proms as well as his vocationally-based gardening programmes such as *How to be a Gardener* (BBC, 2002-03). Recently this has extended to his presentation of the chat show *The Alan Titchmarsh Show* (Spun Gold TV for ITV1, 2007-) as well as a slot DJ-ing on BBC Radio 2.[19] Indeed, the boom in factual entertainment on

17 Lury cited in Bonner, *Ordinary Television*, p. 74.

18 Indeed, comedy is one of the most difficult distinctions to make in terms of its 'vocational' or 'televisual' origin.

19 Of course, I am conscious here that such televisual skills may be closely linked to those of radio performance. Similarities and differences in terms of qualities of voice, notions of intimacy and modes of address between both media is a larger discussion than I can have here. I wish only to note that it would seem rather facile to exclude performers whose careers span both television and radio from consideration as television personalities. Such an approach would be analogous to negating the star status of those film stars who also perform on the theatre stage.

British television from the late 1990s onwards has led to the vocationally skilled presenter no longer simply divulging their specialized knowledge, but producing or maintaining a performance similar to the televisually skilled performer. This is notable in lifestyle programming's increased reliance on the ability of one of its vocational performers to present the programme, rather than using a presenter (who is solely televisually skilled) acting as an intermediary between expert and ordinary contestant/viewer. For example, on British television, Carole Smillie's position as the televisually skilled host of *Changing Rooms* (BBC, 1997-2004) was increasingly supplemented, and eventually replaced, by the performance of Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, who originally joined the series as a vocational expert in design. Thus, whereas the many early-to-mid 1990s makeover programmes discussed by Rachel Moseley in her foundational study of lifestyle programming,[20] such as *Changing Rooms* or *Style Challenge* (BBC, 1996-2000), were generally presented by a televisually skilled performer, by the turn of the millennium programmes such as *Ground Force* (BBC, 1998-2004) and *What Not to Wear* (BBC, 2002-) rested on the performances of vocationally skilled performers alone. Similarly, one can think of the trend of the 'ordinary' person on television (such as the reality show contestant) developing or exhibiting the televisual skill necessary to become a television personality.

Whether vocationally or televisually skilled, the television personality will exemplify some kind of 'ordinariness', implying that they can be perceived as 'extraordinarily ordinary', and this image will pervade their appearances across intertexts. As Bonner argues, 'presenters need to convey at least an appearance of ordinariness. Exceptional intelligence or insight must be disguised or disavowed, as must high social status.'[21] Television personalities' 'will to ordinariness' insists that they position themselves as 'just like' the audience in many ways: for example, cookery programmes often present the personality (as if they were) at home.[22]

In what follows, I examine the concepts of ordinariness, authenticity and credibility in relation to the 'vocationally' and 'televisually' skilled performer. To this end, whilst I will make reference to other performers, my discussions will focus on Cilla Black and Alan Titchmarsh, both of whom have had extended careers on British television and for a time represented the two major institutions of British broadcasting, ITV and the BBC.[23] I first examine how authenticity and ordinariness were both constructed by and intrinsic to the function and importance of Black's televisual image, before going on to examine how authenticity is linked to credibility in Titchmarsh's televisual image, which, through its construction as down to earth and ordinary, negotiates complex notions of Britishness in relation to the BBC's position in the new millennium.

Susan Murray's work on the origins of television stardom, developed from radio and cinema at the inception of the new technology, traces how the vaudeville/comedy star was positioned as 'the ideal television

20 Rachel Moseley, 'Makeover takeover on British television', *Screen*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2000), pp. 299–314.

21 Bonner, *Ordinary Television*, p. 47.

22 This second point is noted by Bonner, drawing on Jane Shattuc, ibid., p. 69.

23 Whilst Black's television career was launched on the BBC with the vehicle *Cilla* (BBC, 1968-1976), from the late 1970s onwards, her televisual image has been almost exclusively associated with ITV through programmes such as *Surprise, Surprise* (LWT/ITV, 1984-2002), *Blind Date* (LWT/ITV, 1985-2003) and *Cilla's Moment of Truth* (LWT/ITV, 1998-2001). I am particularly interested in these programmes because, unlike *Cilla*, they depended almost solely on her televisual skill in presenting, rather than making use of her vocational singing skills. At the time of revising this essay, Alan Titchmarsh has just begun an afternoon chat show on ITV, *The Alan Titchmarsh Show,* but remains a fixture of the BBC's schedules in programmes such as *The Nature of Britain* (BBC, 2007) and *The Great British Village Show* (BBC, 2007). Given my interest in exploring Titchmarsh's relationship to notions of national identity, the association of Cilla Black with ITV and Titchmarsh with the BBC remains a useful distinction.

performer' because of their 'ability to represent what the industry believed were its primacy aesthetic properties – immediacy, intimacy and spontaneity'.[24] Murray's analysis of a number of prominent US performers from the late 1940s to the end of the 1950s goes on to suggest how such qualities were easily equated and conflated with the expectation that television personalities' onscreen appearances were authentic, 'in order to promote viewer identification with both a program's star and products'.[25] Her retelling of Arthur Godfrey's fall from grace as US television's most famous personality, whose amicable onscreen self was exposed as inauthentic when he fired a coperformer on air and rumours began to surface about his hard-nosed attitude, demonstrates the primacy placed on authenticity in the construction of a successful onscreen televisual image. Indeed, as recently as 2002, the follies of exposing the real persona as separate from and irreconcilable with one's televisual image have resulted in the sacking of the British television presenters Angus Deayton and John Leslie from their positions as hosts of gameshows and daytime television.

Indeed thinking about authenticity as a kind of 'just-as-they-are-ness' in relation to Deayton is particularly illuminating: whilst his presentation of the satirical quiz show *Have I Got News For You* (Hat Trick for BBC, 1990-) was always infused with a sense of sardonic wit that was far from wholesome, his sacking in 2002, for revelations about his use of cocaine and prostitutes, was mostly due to the BBC's desire to protect the image of the Corporation as a trustworthy and responsible broadcaster. Deayton's subsequent career has been marked by an attempt to distinguish the 'real' person from the television personality, both by taking on dramatic and comedic roles in a variety of series and by incorporating this layer of bad-boy behaviour into his televisual image. Thus his return to the BBC the following year as host of a one-off *Comic Relief Does University Challenge* special (BBC, 2003) was marked by a self-deprecating performance, whilst his potentially more long-term return to the BBC as presenter of *Would I Lie to You* (Endemol for BBC, 2007-), a panel gameshow based on the successful telling of lies, plays explicitly with incorporating his 'real life' into the authenticity of his televisual image. In this sense, authenticity therefore relates to the idea that the audience is getting the real 'Angus Deayton' rather than a performance.

In part, therefore, the television personality's success is predicated on ensuring the audience believes there is a 'perfect fit' between their 'real' persona and the television personality as image. As Langer suggests, this is built up over a series of performances and continuity in programme format, genre and performance style. He argues:

> Each repeated appearance, even though it may not elicit 'personal data' . . . nonetheless tends to build what is perceived to be a knowable and known 'television self'. This television self, increasingly

24 Susan Murray, *Hitch your Antenna to the Stars: Early Television and Broadcast Stardom* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2005), pp. xiv–xv.

25 Ibid., p. 129.

authenticated with each regular appearance, coheres into the form of a 'genuine' personality.[26]

For Cilla Black, this continuity of style and format is found in her almost continuous presence on British television for nearly forty years, having graduated from checking coats at Liverpool's famous Cavern Club, to a brief but successful pop career, to British television institution. Whilst her initial appearances in *Cilla* (BBC, 1968-76) and, to a lesser extent, *Surprise, Surprise* (LWT/ITV, 1984-2002) were principally reliant on her vocational skill as a singer, her success was increasingly established by her televisual skill and persona alone. By the mid 1990s, Black was considered one of the preeminent performers on television, described by industry magazine *Broadcast* as part of London Weekend Television's 'enviable stable of the three Bs – Barrymore, Black and Beadle'.[27]

Her first series, *Cilla*, was largely structured as a variety programme, allowing Black to sing, dance and act in comedy sketches, and the programme's original premiss was to foreground Black's musical skill and stardom. The programme's centrepiece was to be its request spot, in which Cilla would surprise people by appearing in ordinary places (such as supermarkets or petrol stations) and asking for a request to be performed on the programme that week. As Black's musical star began to wane, however, her televisual image became less reliant on this part of her persona. Thus, whilst her next vehicle *Surprise, Surprise* still privileged her vocational talent by giving her a 'star turn' in singing the programme's theme song, this skill was largely irrelevant to the majority of the programme's format, which promised to fulfil the dreams of ordinary members of the public. Indeed, as I demonstrate in more detail below, it is this constant contact with ordinary people that reinforces the sense that the television personalities' televisual image is authentic. In particular, Black's much vaunted 'humble beginnings' as the daughter of a Liverpudlian dock-worker added to the sense that her image was 'ordinary', and thus she could act as an intermediary between the audience and the guest stars on *Cilla* and the dream scenarios on *Surprise, Surprise*. The regional aspect of Cilla's persona was also important, for, as Lury notes, northern accents on British television retain, if only notionally, connotations of working-class ordinariness and authenticity.[28] However, this authenticity has to be negotiated by a performance which, whilst intimate, immediate, spontaneous and palpably authentic, must also clearly construct a televisual image that positions the television personality with 'star' qualities: this is what elevates their status from television presenter to television personality.

Whilst Black's 'star-status' in her earlier shows was defined by her musical stardom, the authenticity of her persona established here was complemented in her later programmes which signalled her star status without suggesting that she was extraordinary and without diminishing the appeal of her already-authenticated image. The opening sequence of *Blind Date* is therefore principally aimed at constructing Black as the

26 Langer, 'Television's personality system', p. 169.

27 The star terminology is interesting here, calling up the Hollywood studio era of stardom, which is further reinforced by then deputy controller of LWT Ken Roaft's comments in the same article that 'LWT has always operated a mini-star system'. C. Wood, 'Star cheque', *Broadcast*, 10 February 1995, p. 22.

28 Karen Lury, *Interpreting Television* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 197.

'star' of the programme, which the rest of her performance then negotiates. The title sequence of *Blind Date* introduces the format of the programme, showing 'snippets' from upcoming moments and speculating as to how last week's contestants fared. This title sequence opens onto shots of the studio set and audience, and the stage is set for Black's delayed entrance, as the audience is whipped into a state of excited anticipation by the sequence's culmination in 'our Graham's' (Graham Skidmore) voiceover: 'Ladies and gentleman it's *Blind Date*. And here is your host, Miss Cilla Bl-a-a-a-ck.' The voiceover is presented in the style of a circus ringmaster, growing gradually louder as it reaches Black's name, which is then almost shouted in an attempt to drive (or cue) the audience into a frenzy of applause for the 'star'. As Skidmore's voiceover trails off, there is a cut to a more central camera angle that is focused on a spotlight at the top of the set's main stairs, into which Black steps. However, rather than walking on as a starlet of the screen or projecting a sense of extraordinariness, Black appears laughing and waving to the crowd, enjoying and appreciative of the audience's applause (and occasional wolf whistle). As she reaches her presentation spot at the bottom of the stairs, the music stops and, at the respectful silencing of the audience, Black commences her introduction.

This opening sequence signals the 'stardom' of Black to both the studio and home audience. However, the rest of her performance is largely aimed at renouncing any particular extraordinariness that may pervade her celebrity status with notions of 'star' unattainability. During the introduction and following section, Black's performance is aimed at not only (re)establishing an intimate connection with the audience, but also ensuring that she remains the focal point of the programme and the entity on which the text is centred. By concentrating on these elements of performance, we can understand how the televisual image is constructed. Lury separates these performance elements, which we might think of as televisual skill, between aspects of technique and technology whereby the former are 'aligned to [the performer's] given physiology [technique], as opposed to technology . . . [which comprises] the process of filming and recording'.[29] Paying attention to the subsequent section of *Blind Date*, therefore, we can see that a form of 'delegated looking' is managed by both technique and technology to allow Black's position to be identificatory for the viewer. Black's performance technique and her control of the show are embellished by technology, via camera angles and editing, which ensure that contestants only appear in the classic television mid closeup when in relation to Black, and thus construct the shot as if it were a point-of-view shot. This 'placing' of the viewer ensures that Black has the ability to organize and control the programme, and in particular, the appearances and performances of the contestants. Thus, in an episode screened in December 2001, Black can be seen to champion the cause of Joel, whose good looks and desire to work with children she finds 'adorable', eventually leading to this contestant being chosen.

29 Lury, 'Television performance', p. 118.

Further, Black's shifting use of direct address creates a sense of intimacy between viewer and performer, bringing her comfortably into the domestic environment. James Naremore has described how this mode of address in a variety performance can change rapidly to create an interesting and engaging performance, suggesting that 'In the chatty episodes, players cultivate a shifting gaze, aimed now at the interviewer or interviewee, now at the studio audience, now at the lens of the camera'.[30] These shifts in address also indicate how Black can be classed as a televisually skilled performer, marking her performance with control. Black is able to shift her presentation between studio audience, contestants and home viewer in a fluid performance that ensures she does not lose the attention, or control, of any of these audiences. Thus in a typical introductory section of the programme, Black's eye and body language will utilize a direct address to camera for the home viewer and then switch attention to the studio audience, signalled both by a shift in her eye contact, which looks above the camera as well as an increased use of gesture, such as exaggerated hand movements. Finally her attention may be focused on the contestants, for example in the final segment, in which contestants receive a hug and kiss from the show's 'star', ensuring Black's ordinariness and accessibility are reemphasized to both contestants and audience(s). Indeed, the interaction with contestants showcases Black's televisual skill as she negotiates the flirtations between contestants and the occasional overtures made to her. Black therefore creates an image of a safely flirtatious 'mother figure'.

Writing recently about lifestyle programming, Deborah Philips suggests that the presence of the ordinary person is primarily for the purpose of illustrating the expert's thesis, and that ordinary people's inability to access direct address results in the expert '"relaying" their expression to the people watching'.[31] However, I would argue that the presence of ordinary people also allows the television personality to appear more convincingly 'just-as-they-really-are'. As Charlotte Brunsdon has noted in a different context, the point of such participants 'is their ordinariness'.[32] As such, the aesthetic strategies discussed above largely serve to deny the role of performance. The presence of ordinary people emphasizes the sense of immediacy, spontaneity and revelation of the essential self in performance. As an element in the production of which the television personality is not entirely in control, the ordinary person's presence connotes a lack of premeditation in the television personality's performance, but it also acts as a guarantee of our (potential) access to the essential, private self of the television personality. A feeling of familiarity between audience and television personality is thus made explicitly pivotal to the success of a television personality's image. Their televisual image is not only authentic, it is also one of ordinariness – able to be 'just-as-they-are' with ordinary members of the public. The constructed-ness of such ordinariness suggests that one might profitably mine, as I

30 James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), p. 35.

31 Deborah Philips, 'Transformation scenes: the television interior makeover', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2005), p. 223.

32 Charlotte Brunsdon et al., 'Factual entertainment on British television: the Midlands TV Research Group's "8-9 project"', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2001), p. 56.

do elsewhere in my work, the televisual image of personalities such as Black's in relation to questions of class and gender.

However, I now want to turn to a discussion of vocationally skilled performers through an examination of Alan Titchmarsh's televisual image. As I have suggested, the mode of authenticity and the functioning of the television personality's image differ according to whether we understand them as a televisually or vocationally skilled performer. With the latter, authenticity is complemented and reinforced by the concept of credibility. Credibility functions in relation to vocational skill, reassuring the viewer that the skills being presented are authentic and worth investing in (in the form of copying or learning). As vocationally skilled performers generally appear in factual/infotainment genres, it is important that their skills appear to be realistic and that the performer is actually 'good' at their vocational skill. This is crucial to their intertextual appearances and the success of spinoff merchandising.

Like Black, Titchmarsh has a long and successful history on British television. Having appeared in a low-key way in a range of programmes from the early 1980s onwards, Titchmarsh has become a central fixture of the television schedules since 1991 when he successfully fronted the relaunch of the popular daytime magazine programme *Pebble Mill* (BBC, 1991-96, previously *Pebble Mill at One* [1972-86]). Having presented the BBC's annual coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show since 1983, and its long-running *Gardeners' World* series from 1996 to 2002, Titchmarsh has become not simply, as Lisa Taylor has noted, the 'most prominent British media garden expert' on UK television, but also a fully fledged television personality.[33] The story of *Ground Force* (BBC, 1988-2005), a gardening makeover programme that was commissioned following the success of *Pebble Mill*, is worth briefly recounting in this context. According to the series' producer, John Thornicroft, *Ground Force* was commissioned when 'the BBC said they wanted a programme that was a bit like *Changing Rooms*, but it had to be in the garden, [pause] with Alan Titchmarsh'. Thornicroft, on the *Best of Ground Force* DVD (of which interestingly there are two – one a simple compilation, the other a celebration of 'The Titchmarsh years', released to coincide with his departure in 2002), explained that following the *Changing Rooms* model, which required two families labouring on completing a garden in a day, proved too difficult. He suggests that this problem was solved, and the programme 'really came alive', when Alan 'got down off that umpire's chair and started rushing around madly helping everyone. Then we felt like we were on to something.' This implies that *Ground Force* was commissioned not only as a vehicle for Titchmarsh, but that its ultimate success was indebted to his televisual, as much as his vocational, skill.

Titchmarsh has since left such team-based programmes to front increasingly individual projects, such as *How to be a Gardener* (which, starting in 2002, has so far run for two series and spawned the fastest-selling gardening book of all time in the UK. More importantly, his

33 Lisa Taylor, 'From ways of life to lifestyle: the "ordinary-ization" of British gardening lifestyle television', *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, no. 4 (2002), p. 493.

departure from these programmes facilitated his appearance in a series of non-gardening programmes in a manner that confirms both his increased popularity as a television personality and the development of his televisual presentational skills, to the extent that programmes are no longer determined by his vocational skills, but by his televisual image alone. As Jane Root, then Controller of BBC2, said in 2002: 'Alan has played a central role in *Gardeners' World*'s enduring popularity, but he is terrifically versatile and we are keen to work on more projects with him'.[34] Thus, in 2004 Titchmarsh became the lead presenter of the BBC's coverage of the annual series of classical concerts, the Proms, and signed a contract worth a reported £1.5 million over three years to front programmes such as *British Isles: a Natural History* (BBC, 2005), a programme to which his name is added as a byline. The show is produced with the BBC's renowned natural history unit, and achieves audiences of over five million viewers – over 20% of the available audience – per episode.

Before going on to look in more detail at *British Isles: a Natural History*, it is important to examine how Titchmarsh's televisual image is authenticated in a manner which stresses both his ordinariness and the credibility of his skills. *How to be a Gardener*'s title sequence clearly constructs Titchmarsh as someone whom the audience can trust and rely on for credible, expert gardening advice. The title sequence presents a mini-narrative of Titchmarsh's life that is intended to authenticate his gardening knowledge. A series of stylized images, with a home-movie aesthetic, depict a young Alan not simply playing in the reconstructed garden of his youth, but rather taking pleasure in investigating it, nurturing it and developing his gardening skills as he transforms into the personality we know and trust (figures 1-3). Whilst the sequence reminds us of Titchmarsh's gardening skills – suggesting that gardening is, in fact, his life – it also helps to anchor and remind viewers of his specific qualities as a televisual performer; that is, his presentation style is one that is often described as full of 'boyish enthusiasm'.

In turn, such sequences go towards confirming his image as an *ordinary* gardener, someone who simply enjoys mucking in, and mucking about. This image of Titchmarsh owes much to the continuity of his performance style and establishment of a televisual image, particularly in relation to *Ground Force.* The development of this programme's format, once Titchmarsh's televisual skill had been 'stumbled upon', involved the addition of a supporting cast of gardeners and builders. The casting of Tommy Walsh and Charlie Dimmock as helpers in the gardening makeovers created a sense of camaraderie, whereby all performers pitched in, particularly in the face of poor British weather, to get the job done. The presence of Walsh and Dimmock allowed the programme to recreate the image of a stereotypical building site as friendly and fun (albeit extremely sexist, as Walsh, Titchmarsh and the programme makers endlessly concentrated on Dimmock's notable 'failure' to wear a bra). They were ordinary mates having a laugh

34 BBC Press Office, 'Alan Titchmarsh breaks exciting new ground', 28 June 2002. URL: http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/06_june/28/alan_titchmarsh.shtml [accessed 11 December 2007].

Fig. 1.
Title sequence from *How to be a Gardener* (BBC, 2002-)

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

and goofing around, a fact exemplified by the inclusion of mistakes in the programme and an extensive bloopers reel on the *Best of Ground Force* DVD. The format not only authenticated Titchmarsh's skills as credible (able to muck in with the lads and lasses) but also helped to emphasize his televisual image as a down-to-earth, ordinary, working-class bloke.

This is reinforced by his mode of performance across later programmes such as *How to be a Gardener*, in which he often addresses the viewer as 'we' to make gardening a collective project. Similarly, his talk is filled with anecdotes, jokes and observations on life and gardening's pleasures, all delivered in the soft lilt of his Yorkshire accent, often described as 'safe' or 'cosy'.[35] Such a mode of performance works towards diminishing any 'expert' status (that is, any intelligence or insight that would distinguish him as extraordinary from his audience in any way), within his televisual image. However, in his lifestyle programming, both performance technique and technology work towards making his skills seem ordinary, fun, do-able and worth doing, in the same way that Taylor has described as the 'ordinary-ization' of lifestyle aesthetics and knowledges.[36] One of the most obvious techniques in this regard is the use of realist aesthetic strategies and performance styles. Thus the viewer will hear Alan puff and pant while digging a hole or walking up a hill. Titchmarsh's mode of performance therefore deals in what Niki Strange describes as the instructional and informational discourses of lifestyle television, but makes these intimate.[37] As such, the combination of authenticity and credibility here delivers these lessons in a matter-of-fact manner, imbued with a 'common sense' that attempts to close down challenges to his knowledge – not just of gardening but of other ideals of Britishness.

I want initially, therefore, to expand on Taylor's work on gardening programmes, which suggests that through strategies of ordinary-ization, such programming urges ordinary gardeners to invest in lifestyle projects. On the one hand, Taylor's work argues that such ordinary-ization tends to prop up a consumer culture as well as to reinforce dominant ideologies. On the other hand, like Moseley, she also suggests that the 'job of the personality-interpreter is to make elite artistic design knowledge readable for the ordinary would-be gardener' and in so doing the programmes 'might also offer people the opportunity, within the context of the commonplace routines of their everyday lives, to mould the strategies and sites of lifestyle in ways which help them to navigate their own relationship to social change'.[38] As Chaney and Taylor suggest, changes in society have meant that lifestyles 'offer a set of expectations which act as a form of ordered control' in the face of uncertainties wrought by modernity.[39] As I shall go on to show, Titchmarsh's intertextual appearances beyond gardening programming arguably extend this project to his other performances and, in turn, these appearances complicate the meanings of his gardening programmes. By focusing on the television personality as a site of meaning, we can build on Taylor's work to think about how Titchmarsh's image and programming do not simply ordinary-ize elite knowledge or encourage

35 As Sam Wollaston, a regular television critic for *The Guardian*, recently described it: 'If Titchmarsh's voice was a building it would be a village hall, or perhaps a tea room. If it was a musical ensemble, it would be a brass band. It's cosy and quaint, ever so slightly cheeky, but not in a way that's going to upset anyone', *The Guardian*, 20 October 2007.

36 Taylor, 'From ways of life to lifestyle'.

37 Niki Strange, 'Perform, educate, entertain: ingredients of the cookery programme genre', in Christine Geraghty and David Lusted (eds), *The Television Studies Book* (London: Arnold, 1998), pp. 301–14.

38 Taylor, 'From ways of life to lifestyle', pp. 488–91.

39 Chaney, quoted in ibid, p. 482

investment in lifestyles, but can be read as actively promoting particular conservative ideologies and attitudes towards British national identity.

British Isles: a Natural History opens with an aerial shot, climbing rapidly over the mountains of Scotland to the strains of a score that swells with emotional grandeur as the camera picks out the hiking figure of Titchmarsh, who introduces the viewer to a series that will celebrate Britain's natural beauty. 'Just look at it', he exhorts, as we return to sweeping aerial shots of rising peaks and the renewed pronouncement of the score as the audience is then treated to a montage of stunning shots from across the British Isles. A strong 'nationalist' sense of pride is established by the series in its approach to Britain's natural history, largely framed by Titchmarsh's mode of presentation. In his opening monologue, Titchmarsh deliberately relies on his televisual image from gardening programmes, opining that

> maybe it is a life spent working outside, tending the earth, that makes me so passionate about the British Isles and proud to call this place home . . . on a fine day, even the most hardened cynic would have to admit that Britain is one of the most beautiful and diverse countries in the world.

This voiceover is accompanied by a series of dramatic shots of British wildlife, such as dolphins playing, a kingfisher catching its prey, and more sweeping aerial shots of stunning landscapes. Having reminded the viewer of the credibility (if not the authority) and 'down-to-earth' ordinariness of his televisual image, Titchmarsh's monologue is able to assert the 'common-sense' point that everyone should admit that Britain is one of the most beautiful and diverse countries in the world.

The series is full of these 'common-sense' observations, which allow Titchmarsh to proclaim Britain has more bluebells than anywhere else or more rocks than the Dutch. Helen Wheatley's work on natural history programming has suggested how visual pleasure in natural history programming can be read as promoting a particular middle-class taste aesthetic that is largely devoid of political meaning.[40] However, in this context of bombastic nationalism and Titchmarsh's persona, visual splendour and natural history are here continually associated with a celebratory view of Britain's social history. Thus, it is not simply enough for Titchmarsh to proclaim that Britain has 'lots of coal' (hard statistics are difficult to reconcile with his common-sense knowledge). Rather he nostalgically reminisces, over shots of an old steam engine traversing beautiful countryside, that 'the empire we once had was built upon it'. Titchmarsh's description of this 'super rock' is structured so that its identity as coal is 'revealed' to the audience as the programme cuts to a wide-shot of Titchmarsh, dressed in fluorescent flak jacket and standing in front of heavy machinery, who with boyish glee throws his arms wide open and exclaims 'it's coal!'. Glossing over the difficulties that this mineral has caused the country, particularly those inflicted on working-class communities through the destruction of the mining industry in the

40 Helen Wheatley, 'The limits of television? Natural history programming and the transformation of public service broadcasting', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 5 (2004), pp. 325–39.

1980s but also coal's status as an environmentally unsound fossil fuel, he goes on to assert that 'it was because we had so much coal that we became a world leader, something we're still living off today'.

This information is presented in the 'matter-of-fact' performance style of Titchmarsh's gardening programming. As such, it makes ordinary a very particular view of British history; the 'down-to-earth' nature of his televisual image, combined with the cheeky 'knowingness' of his boyish enthusiasm, arguably closes down any challenges to the common-sense view presented as fact.

This is complemented by the programme's 'Boy's Own' aesthetic, arguably connected to ideals of the British Empire. By structuring the series as an exciting journey – zooming about in helicopters and fighter jets, blowing things up, and with an aesthetic of exploration and expedition – Titchmarsh's boyish enthusiasm, as enlisted by *British Isles: a Natural History*, recalls the adventures of *The Boy's Own Paper* which, formed by a religious and moral group at the end of the nineteenth century to promote a gentleman-explorer sensibility in young boys (away from the prurience of the 'penny-dreadfuls'), was heavily laden with morality, a sense of empire and jingoism. Thus at the start of the series, Titchmarsh proclaims, 'I'm going on a journey . . . to find out what's shaped the country we know and love'. This is then immediately followed by a shot of Titchmarsh, dressed in a hard-hat and with an impish grin, detonating dynamite, the sound of the explosion launching the programme into a fast-paced montage of Titchmarsh 'travelling the length and breadth of the country by all manner of means'. Most notably, this includes him climbing aboard an RAF fighter jet, which he declares, over a shot of him in a locker-room strapping up his military-issue boots, is 'every schoolboy's dream'. Framed in closeup, Titchmarsh winks to the camera and the action cuts to a shot of him in the plane, the roar of its engines reverberating with that of the dynamite in the previous shots. The association of Titchmarsh with this Boy's Own tradition reinforces the sense that this programme is meant to be fun and educative, but also coheres to a view that celebrates a nostalgic, and arguably backward- and inward-looking nation.

Overall, the programme employs Titchmarsh's performance style to make ordinary and credible a particular form of knowledge about Britain's social and natural past. The framing of the series as a journey is not simply about the natural forces that shaped the land but is, as Titchmarsh explicitly articulates, an adventure in finding out what 'made Britain great'. This greatness is defined in terms of empire, industrial revolution and a nostalgic framing of Britain as a 'green and pleasant land'. By building on his televisual image from gardening programmes as safe, cosy and a bit of fun, there is an attempt to extend these meanings for broader ideological and political purposes. Arguably, Titchmarsh's image works to reconcile such a middle-England viewpoint with the aims and purposes of the BBC at a period where it must be perceived to be both modern and forward looking, 'building digital Britain', but also

engaging all viewers. In the 2006 White Paper on the future of the BBC, this obligation has been articulated as:

> Making us aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints through content that *reflects the lives of other people and other communities within the UK*.[41]

The language here is problematic, since it suggests that there is a dominant, possibly homogenous, culture within the UK to which 'other people and other communities' might be appended. Programming such as Titchmarsh's helps to sustain this distinction between 'us' and 'them', between a unified cultural identity of Britain (the 'we' Titchmarsh addresses) and its relationship to 'other communities' the UK might contain, presumably those excluded from the 'national' on account of their race, faith or history, for example.

I want to conclude my discussion of Titchmarsh by suggesting how this understanding of the version of Britishness promoted by his televisual image can then be read back into his gardening programmes. From this perspective, Titchmarsh's performances arguably promote gardening as a lifestyle project for middle England and suburbia; they provide a means of dealing with the social change caused by the mass movements of globalization – immigration, refugees and asylum seekers, more permeable borders – by retreating to suburbia, behind the walled, well-ordered gardens of Titchmarsh's design.[42] There is plenty of evidence for such a reading from these programmes themselves, which often display xenophobia or jingoism by giving Titchmarsh space to ridicule costar Dimmock's interest in feng shui, for example, or to impose a British suburban garden on foreign climes, such as that for an Indian Orphanage whose focal point is a water feature that is sits uncomfortably with the pressures on water supply in India. In another notable episode, the *Ground Force* team visited the Falklands, where Titchmarsh ruminated:

> There's a new prosperity based on managing the islands' fishing grounds and a lasting gratitude to all those who secured the future of these islands.

This voiceover was placed over pictures of pioneer-row, British-style bungalows and a lingering shot of Thatcher Avenue, clearly celebrating both Britain's empire and a conservative political stance. In this sequence, the lifestyle project of his gardening programme is as much about building a secure enclave – fences, paving, gates and the great British lawn – against the changes of the modern world which threaten these values and ideals, as it is about horticultural techniques.

Whilst one could argue that it is the programme makers, rather than Titchmarsh himself, who generate such associations, I would suggest that Titchmarsh's televisual image is central to this reading. Such a view of Titchmarsh is reinforced by his 2004-05 presentation of the BBC's coverage of *The Last Night of the Proms*. The choice of Titchmarsh by

41 Department of Culture, Media and Sport, *A Public Service for All: the BBC in the Digital Age* (London: HMSO, 2006), p. 18 (my emphasis).

42 An excellent exposition of the relationship between lifestyle television, class and Britishness can be found in Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Lifestyling Britain: the 8–9 slot on British television', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2003), pp. 5–23.

the BBC was part of a similar project to reframe elite artistic knowledge as ordinary. Indeed, this was perceived by the conservative British broadsheet newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* as 'taking cultural relativism a step too far'.[43] However, in the event, his presence largely served to reinforce the middle-England jingoism of the event, all the while claiming that 'it's not jingoism, it's not xenophobia, it's just honest-to-goodness national pride and fun', yet retaining the conventional shot of a jubilant crowd waving Union Jacks and St George's crosses as they sing the traditional closing-night rendition of Elgar's Land of Hope and Glory.

The appeal of Titchmarsh to middle England is further reinforced by the circulation of his image as an unlikely sex symbol. His ever-so-slightly-racy romantic novels, strongly coded with the sanctity of heterosexual love and agrarian back-to-the-land fantasies, combined with his association with the earth and gardening, serve to construct him as a safe and cuddly Lady Chatterley's lover. In a poll conducted by *Elle* magazine and widely reported by the *Daily Telegraph*, Titchmarsh was voted the second-sexiest man on television in 2000, beaten to top place by George Clooney.[44] Whilst left-leaning media such as *The Observer* newspaper and Channel 4, whose viewers rated Titchmarsh the sixty-second worst Briton of all time, have found this title hard to take seriously, his 'sex in a pullover'[45] televisual image has made him a favourite of more conservative press establishments.[46] This is epitomized by the interview conducted for Saga's (a company which specializes in offering products only to customers over fifty) customer magazine. The interviewer boasts of having made Titchmarsh blush, before gushing over the ageing sex symbol's good looks:

> It's not just that he has a thick thatch of hair, a fresh face and a flat stomach, there is something Peter Pannish about Titchmarsh's demeanour.

The article goes on to recognize the love–hate nature of people's perceptions of Titchmarsh (referring to 'the shameless women who made him "the most groped waxwork in Madame Tussauds"'), focusing on Titchmarsh's mild-mannered temperament, 'born of a humble working-class up-bringing', which stressed the importance of polite etiquette, ultimately concluding that, unlike other television personalities, Titchmarsh is:

> old fashioned, a walking embodiment of the Fifties values with which he was brought up. . . . What Titchmarsh has is deeply unfashionable but it has taken him to the top of his tree: straightforward decency.[47]

Titchmarsh's ordinariness is connected here with a nostalgic view of Britishness and a televisual image that many might now find out of date in the contemporary television landscape. In an era in which we might find a growing body of 'television stars' amongst a more pervasive

43 Judith Woods, 'And just why shouldn't I present the Proms?', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 2004. URL: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2004/07/08/bmtitc08.xml&sSheet=/arts/2004/07/10/ixartright.html [accessed 12 December 2007].

44 Lynn Barber, 'Gardener's question time', *The Observer*, 22 October 2000. URL: http://observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4079811-102278,00.html [accessed 12 December 2007].

45 Sabine Durrant, 'Alan Titchmarsh: sex in a pullover', *The Guardian*, G2 section, 1 May 2000, p. 4.

46 Barber opens her article on Titchmarsh by proclaiming: 'Alan Titchmarsh is a sex god. Deep breath. Try again. Alan Titchmarsh is a sex god. Titchmarsh. Alan. Sex. God. Is... Nope. It's no good – I still can't make that leap of faith.' Barber, 'Gardener's question time'.

47 'A constant gardener', *Saga Magazine* (June 2006).

celebrity culture and increasing media convergence, the notion of television personality as I define it here might itself seem equally nostalgic. Indeed, Cilla is herself now largely retired. However, Titchmarsh's increasing prominence in the schedules suggests that this type of performer and performance remains popular. Furthermore, the performance mode of the most successful ITV presenters Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly suggests the continuation of Cilla Black's performance style.[48] That 'Ant 'n' Dec' are currently the highest-paid television personalities on British television confirms that this kind of ordinariness and authenticity retains its central importance within the television industry.

I am not suggesting that these associations or connotations are the only possible reading of how the television personality is conceived to be ordinary; this will vary with performance styles and genres, themselves subject to the demands and opportunities of scheduling, as well as the changing television landscape. However, the failure to engage critically with the television personality in relation to what ordinariness and authenticity might mean and what function they serve has lead to a tendency to ignore their textual, industrial and cultural importance. Whilst television personalities' economic importance may have been recognized by Langer and Ellis as a way of selling programmes to viewers, their perceived ordinariness and authenticity is not only central to this function but also to understanding the way they function as a site of meaning. Far from 'agreeable voids', the television personality's meaning ranges from the simplest of levels – such as Cilla Black operating either to undermine or support the performance of a contestant on *Blind Date* – through to the more complex ideological and cultural functions that I have outlined in relation to Alan Titchmarsh's televisual image. More work could be done on the importance of particular personalities' televisual image in relation to historical, cultural or ideological debates and trends, but also in terms of treating the television personality as a site of pleasure and achievement. As Murray has recently noted, it is 'downright odd that television historians have not yet . . . followed the example of their counterparts in cinema studies' to analyze television personalities in terms of their own industrial or cultural import.[49] It is time for television studies to do so in more detailed and systematic ways.

48 Cf Karen Lury's discussion of *Ant n Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (Granada for ITV, 2002-), in *Interpreting Television.*

49 Murray, *Hitch your Antenna*, p. xvi.

I would like to thank Rachel Moseley for her interest and encouragement on this project, and many more, across a long period of time. I am also indebted to the insightful comments and criticisms of Karen Lury.

'Paranoia, paranoia, everybody's coming to get me': *Peep Show*, sitcom, and the surveillance society

BRETT MILLS

In the opening titles of the British sitcom *Peep Show* (Channel 4, 2003-) the two main characters, Mark and Jeremy, meet up in a bland suburban high street to buy a television. At first they walk separately towards an electrical shop from different directions. When they meet up in front of the store, they give each other the sort of half-hearted greeting typical of flatmates who probably last saw each other only a couple of hours ago. The differences between the two are immediately obvious, as Jeremy (Robert Webb) is in casual, rave-influenced clothing while Mark (David Mitchell) wears a suit and full-length coat and has a smart side-parting in his hair. Thus the titles work as they must for all sitcoms – they place the series in a location and quickly outline the relationship, and possible difficulties, between the programme's protagonists.

However, *Peep Show* is different from other sitcoms in how it is shot. The first few shots of the opening titles give the viewer handheld views of the suburban high street, as the camera moves along the pavement towards the electrical shop. In these shots we do not see Mark and Jeremy at all, and it is only when they come face to face that we realize what is different about the programme. As the viewer sees a succession of shots in which Mark and Jeremy, in turn, look directly into the camera, and the camera then pans across to a television in the shop window showing the pair captured by a video camera on display, it becomes clear that what we are witnessing are point-of-view shots, and that the whole series is shot from the perspectives of the characters within it. In addition, unrevealed in the opening titles is the fact that we are privy to

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn004

the interior monologues of its two protagonists, so that just as we see what they see, so we hear what they think. Indeed, one of the main ways in which *Peep Show* finds its comedy is through the juxtaposition of what its characters are thinking and what societal norms are forcing them to say. And while the series uses point-of-view shots for many of its characters, it allows the audience access to Mark's and Jeremy's interior monologues only, thus focusing attention on the difficulties of particular kinds of contemporary masculinity.

While rare, the use of voiceover is not unknown in sitcom. Examples can be found across the decades, such as *The Strange World of Gurney Slade* (ATV, 1960), *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin* (BBC1, 1976-79), *Butterflies* (BBC2, 1978-83), *The Wonder Years* (ABC, 1988-93), *Scrubs* (NBC, 2001-), and *Kath and Kim* (ABC, 2002-05; Seven Network, 2007-). In all of these cases, the voice is not detached from the physical presence of the onscreen character (what Karen Lury calls the 'acousmatic presence'[1]), but instead 'encourage[s] empathetic feeling from the viewer'[2] by allowing a more personal mode of address to exist between character and audience. While such monologues allow the audience access to the thoughts and responses of particular characters in these series, they are clearly presented as if those characters know there is a listener to whom their inner voice is being addressed. In that sense, such monologues position characters as narrators of their own lives, able to question and critique themselves and their circumstances for the benefit of an audience. The interior monologues in *Peep Show*, however, do not fulfil this function, as Mark and Jeremy do not know they are being overheard and thus are not addressing anyone else. The programme's conceit, therefore, is predicated on the pleasure for the audience of eavesdropping on resolutely private thoughts; it is this structure which gives the show its title.

At first this can be a little unnerving. The point-of-view shot is rare on television, so it can sometimes be difficult to make sense of what is going on and who is talking to whom. This visual style also presents significant storytelling problems for the programme's makers, because point-of-view limits what can be shown to the audience to what is seen by the characters. The first two scenes of the first episode of *Peep Show* present Mark and Jeremy separately, with Jeremy at home alone dancing to some music he has just written and Mark running to catch a bus at the end of a day's work. As neither of these scenes includes other characters from whose point-of-view we can be shown Mark and Jeremy's actions, the programme-makers have both Mark and Jeremy look into mirrors. While Jeremy's narcissistic examination of his own torso while dancing is legitimized by his character, Mark's look at his own reflection in the rear-view mirror of the bus as he boards the vehicle has little narrative purpose and instead seems merely to allow the audience to see whose point-of-view it has been sharing. Such difficulties arise repeatedly throughout the series, particularly as one of its main themes is the insular, self-obsessed nature of its protagonists, demonstrated by how difficult it

1 Karen Lury, *Interpreting Television* (London: Hodder, 2005), p. 59.

2 John Corner, *The Art of Record: a Critical Introduction to Documentary* (New York, NY and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 30.

is for them, and how unwilling they are, to communicate with one another and those around them.

Through its use of point-of-view, *Peep Show* focuses on issues of looking and being seen. While the technical capabilities of television mean that we also hear what the characters hear, the programme's interest is consistently grounded in what the characters see and, more importantly, how they are seen by others. Mark, in particular, is worried about the impression he gives to his family, his colleagues and strangers, and a narrative thread throughout the series is his desire to woo his colleague Sophie; thus he continually worries about what she might think of him. Jeremy, on the other hand, professes to have no such qualms, and constantly cites his relaxed attitude as a response to his involvement in the underground dance scene and music industry. However, this subculture is itself shown to be one grounded in image, with its members distinguished by wearing the right clothes, using the appropriate slang and adopting a resolute disregard for social concerns; the programme mocks Jeremy for his failure to conform comfortably to these norms, particularly in comparison to his friend and musical partner, Super Hans.

It is clear that Mark's and Jeremy's concerns relate to contemporary issues of masculinity, where 'Within patriarchal cultures a man can feel shamed if he thinks he is not being respected'.[3] Such respect must arise from external sources even if, as Mark and Jeremy demonstrate, those sources differ between individual men. Indeed, in their differences, Mark and Jeremy not only conform to the sitcom staple of the mismatched couple such as Tony and Jack in *The Odd Couple* (ABC, 1970-75), Joey and Chandler in *Friends* (NBC, 1994–2004) or Howard and Vince in *The Mighty Boosh* (BBC3, 2004-) but also personify two recurrent notions of masculinity, the 'puritan' and the 'playboy'.[4] In demonstrating the difficulty of aligning oneself with masculine 'norms', *Peep Show* demonstrates that masculinity is seen to be in 'crisis',[5] as particular historical certainties associated with gender are assumed to have been undermined by contemporary social, political and economic factors. That said, in finding humour in the characters' inability to conform to social norms, inflected through societal categories such as class, age or gender, the programme clearly aligns itself with a heritage of sitcom that has repeatedly presented social inadequates – whether aware of their own shortcomings or not – as laughable.[6]

However, the programme's novel shooting style means that the ways in which audiences are positioned in relation to the characters are different from those in most sitcoms, and this has consequences for how the jokes work, and the pleasures an audience may take from laughing at them. More importantly, the programme demonstrates a whole set of assumptions about contemporary society, and the ways in which the acts of seeing and being seen are fundamental to social performance and moral surety. That is, the shooting style is not simply a novel way of making jokes 'work'; it is also a demonstration of the nature of seeing in

3 Victor J. Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities: Men, Culture, Bodies, Power, Sex and Love* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 74.

4 See Paul Hoch, *White Hero, Black Beast: Racism, Sexism and the Mask of Masculinity* (London: Pluto Press, 1979).

5 See Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press, 1994); John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity* (Philadelphia, PA and Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998); Anthony Clare, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000); John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Philadelphia, PA and Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), pp. 75–97.

6 See Richard Butsch, 'Ralph, Fred, Archie and Homer: why television keeps recreating the white male working-class buffoon', in Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (eds), *Gender, Race and Class in Media: a Text-Reader* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 403–12.

society which draws on the ways in which sitcom and humour have been presented and understood for decades. The use of point-of-view is no mere novelty, nor a technical exercise in which the pleasure arises from seeing if the programme makers are able to create a programme that makes sense considering the restrictions they have set themselves. This can be seen in the ways in which the programme makers are happy to break their own rules by including 'impossible' shots – in particular, closeups – which never fully undermine the point-of-view shooting but which certainly demonstrate a willingness to stretch the concept in the cause of making the programme work. The fact that the programme *does* make sense demonstrates that television, as a domestic medium, is somehow capable of aligning its viewers with the experiences of its characters. Of course, as point-of-view 'mimics, but does not exactly replicate, the perpetual state of the character',[7] it needs only to offer a version of alignment which conforms to the representational strategies of television. However, in so doing, *Peep Show* places the possibility of one's actions being observed, recorded and judged by others at the core of contemporary social life. Similarly, through the use of point-of-view, it places what we see and the act of seeing as the primary way in which we make sense of the world around us, even if television has only a limited capacity for representing that act.

The programme is thus clearly informed by the concept of the 'surveillance society'.[8] In *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*, David Lyon takes a quantitative and qualitative approach to the idea that surveillance is a central component of the ways in which industrialized nations regulate themselves. Quantitatively, he shows that the spread of CCTV means that being recorded, and being aware that you might at any time be recorded, has become a part of everyday life, and the proliferation of this technology is justified on the grounds of social cohesion and crime prevention. Qualitatively, he suggests that this has significant implications for the ways in which we make sense of the world around us and behave within it. Thus, seeing and being seen have become experiences central to contemporary societies, and it is these experiences that *Peep Show* mines for its comic material. The surveillance society is one in which deviancy is controlled less through punishment and more through the *possibility* of punishment, because all deviant acts can be witnessed and subsequently prosecuted; it is 'part of the technology of social control'.[9] In this way, we have moved from a society that punishes deviancy to one that attempts to prevent deviancy from occurring in the first place.

In conjunction with this, acts are only validated in the surveillance society if they are seen, witnessed and, by extension, recorded. It is this notion which, it is argued, has led to a 'celebrity culture',[10] in which popular acclaim and validation are attributed not in relation to the possession of specific skills but to the ability to be seen and recorded by media technology. Jeremy's desire to be a famous musician is predicated on this assumption. His own knowledge of his musical skill (or lack of it)

7 Jinhee Choi, 'Leaving it up to the imagination', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 63, no. 1 (2005), p. 21.

8 David Lyon, *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001).

9 Gareth Palmer, *Discipline and Liberty: Television and Governance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 35.

10 Jessica Evans, 'Celebrity: what's the media got to do with it?', in Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh (eds), *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 7.

is not recognized as validation in itself; instead he *becomes* a musician in a meaningful sense only if he is seen to be one – that is, if he appears on particular television programmes and in certain magazines in the role of a musician, so that his existence is vindicated by the acknowledgement of others. As he invests his sense of self in being seen, Jeremy has few problems with the surveillance society and, indeed, aspires to profit from it. Mark, on the other hand, embodies the problems that may be created by a surveillance society, as he spends much of his time in anguish over how he is seen by others. Mark's desire to be left alone to read books about Stalingrad is constantly thwarted by the ways in which others see him. However, in the context of the surveillance society, his knowledge of his social inadequacies are seen to be surmountable not through dealing with them but simply by presenting himself as if he is not socially inadequate. If we are now 'simultaneously both the subject and object of contemporary media',[11] it is Jeremy who is a willing subject and Mark who is an unwilling object; the fact that this distinction can be a significant aspect of contemporary living demonstrates 'that surveillance by unseen observers is an integral feature of advanced societies'.[12]

The opening titles of *Peep Show* show this in action. In meeting up to buy a television, Mark and Jeremy are purchasing a technology whose primary meaning-making method is its visuality, allowing viewers access to events, people and places that would otherwise be impossibly out of reach. Yet in so doing, Mark and Jeremy are themselves captured by technology of record; they appear on screens in the electrical shop's windows because they are standing in front of a camcorder in that window. They look at each other individually, but they also see themselves broadcast across the shop, visible to other shoppers, the store's employees and passers-by. Mark and Jeremy look glum, unhappy that they are captured in this way and beamed out to the street; however, they also look resigned, fully aware that this is an inescapable aspect of contemporary culture, something they can do nothing about. In buying a television they are contributing to a system that requires an act of looking; the pleasures which the technology will bring are therefore seen to justify the loss of privacy which related technology such as CCTV and camcorders will bring to life as a whole.[13]

However, there is also the question of how we, the television audience, are being positioned here. Sitting at home, watching an episode of *Peep Show*, we are looking at a television screen on which there is a picture of two characters staring directly back at us, except they are not doing so directly, because we are seeing a television screen on our television screen. Thus we are not just looking at them, we are being positioned so that we are also looking from the same position as they are, and since they are therefore looking at themselves, this means that we, in a sense, take their place. What we are watching is a picture taken by a video camera of a picture taken by a video camera. The fact that this doubling of viewing positions is not confusing (or, at least, if it is confusing, it only takes the opening titles to make it comprehensible) demonstrates how

11 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 231.

12 Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 69.

13 See Palmer, *Discipline and Liberty*, pp. 25–34, for a summary of the public debates about CCTV, which he demonstrates predominantly view security as of higher priority than privacy.

normal the intrusion of video technology and the acts of seeing and being seen have become. Mark's sand Jeremy's resigned faces may also signal the passive dismay which some individuals within a surveillance society display in relation to the 'visual possession'[14] it involves.

As noted above, *Peep Show* can be seen as representative of television's increasing examination of the ways in which 'normal' people live their lives. While programmes such as *Big Brother* (Channel 4, 2000-) put the activities of a group of housemates on display within an artificial context, series such as *Video Nation* (BBC, 1993-) have allowed 'ordinary' people to tell the stories of their own lives and have control over the ways in which this is done.[15] These programmes, in conjunction with talk shows such as *The Jerry Springer Show* (syndicated, 1991-) and *The Jeremy Kyle Show* (ITV1, 2005-) have been seen as evidence of an increasingly relaxed attitude among the British towards discussing hitherto private matters in public.[16] Indeed, the argument is that the encroachment of the surveillance society renders privacy near redundant, as our lives are increasingly witnessed and recorded.[17] In its use of interior monologues, *Peep Show* demonstrates the distinction that is still to be made between the personal thoughts of an individual and the public performances of that person. That is, the technologies of record remain capable of recording the physical activities of individuals only; the psychology of such activities can remain hidden, and the only way they can be suggested is through the visible and audible markers of speech and gesture. For Mark in *Peep Show*, the interior monologue remains an importantly private place, away from the prying eyes of society at large, and is therefore something to be defended vigorously. After various deviant activities at work, and hovering on the edge of a nervous breakdown due to the ways in which he feels he is being judged by colleagues, Mark is forced to go into therapy. There he is extremely reluctant to engage in any debate about his internal psychology, partly for fear of misinterpretation, partly because of embarrassment about how he thinks his therapist will respond to what he really thinks, but primarily because he wants to keep that aspect of his life private and personal, away from the prying eyes of society. Mark therefore demonstrates the limitations of the surveillance society – that it can only control that which it can see, record and document.

Yet the programme also suggests that this defence is not infallible. That is, while Mark and Jeremy keep their thoughts to themselves (though we as a television audience can hear them), the programme demonstrates the ways in which the characters are shocked and surprised by their own psychology. Once Mark eventually agrees to therapy, he is invited to play word association. Throughout the sequence he constantly censors his immediate thoughts, afraid of the conclusions the therapist might draw if he reveals his 'real' answers (interior monologue in square brackets):

Therapist:	Work.
Mark:	[Snake-pit] Snake . . . charmer.

14 Vivian Sobchack, 'The scene of the screen: envisioning cinematic and electronic presence', in John T. Caldwell (ed.), *Electronic Media and Technoculture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), p. 142.

15 See Brian Winston, *Lies, Damn Lies, and Documentaries* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), p. 143, on *Video Nation*'s representative project.

16 See Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt, *Talk on Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1994), and Jon Dovey, *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (London: Pluto, 2000). It should be noted that there is resistance to this development: in September 2007 a British judge, overseeing a case in which a guest on *The Jeremy Kyle Show* was prosecuted for assaulting another participant on the programme, called the series 'a human form of bear-baiting'.

17 See Nicholas Garnham, *Emancipation, the Media, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), for a historical view of this, which places contemporary views on privacy within a narrative traced back to the beginning of society.

Therapist:	Just say the first thing that comes to mind. Money.
Mark:	[Everything] Not everything.
Therapist:	Children
Mark:	[Blind] Er, short.
Therapist:	Father.
Mark:	[Fuehrer] Football.
Therapist:	Mother.
Mark:	[Sophie] Fuck! No, not 'fuck'!

In the final question, Mark is so surprised that his unconscious should equate his mother with the woman with whom he is infatuated that he swears; then, realizing that his expletive could be read as a desire to sleep with his mother, is compelled to backtrack. The sequence thus demonstrates 'a view of surveillance according to which the all-seeing eye may cause many things to be repressed, hidden within'.[18] Mark's fears in relation to how he is seen, coupled with his inability to make sense of himself, is demonstrated later in the sequence when he is shown a Rorschach blot which his interior monologue tells us he interprets as 'a twat. A big hairy twat', but which he tells the therapist reminds him of 'a lovely kitten'.

This could align Mark within a tradition of British sitcom characters with little understanding of how they might be seen by others, and a failure to understand, or be comfortable with, their own psychology. The characters of David Brent in *The Office* (BBC, 2001-03), Del Boy in *Only Fools and Horses* (BBC, 1981-96, 2001-03) and Alf Garnett in *Till Death Us Do Part* (BBC, 1965-75) can be traced back to Tony Hancock in *Hancock's Half-Hour* (BBC, 1956-60), and provide a clear lineage of similarly flawed individuals. However, the shooting style of *Peep Show*, coupled with the interior monologue, sets up a different relationship between audience and comedy character, and therefore implies a different reading of Mark's and Jeremy's psychoses. Most of the characters cited above are blissfully unaware of the their foibles, and the comedy arises from their failure to see the consequences of their inappropriate behaviour or the inevitable downfall which awaits them. Mark and Jeremy, on the other hand, are all too aware of their own idiocies; indeed, some of the humour in Mark's case comes from his near paranoia about the world around him and his unwillingness to accept that, deep down, he might be as normal as everyone else. Mark is incapable of communicating with those close to him partly because he cannot make sense of the rules of social acceptability, but mainly because he does not actually know what he really thinks or feels. His interior monologue constantly questions his own motives, and he is never sure of the veracity of his own emotional responses to events around him. While Mark could be seen as emblematic of 'a range of new technologies of the self in which self-inspection comes to replace the confessional',[19] it is significant that he sees the enforced introspection as contradictory and unrevealing. At the core of characters like Brent, Del Boy and Garnett is

18 John E. McGrath, *Loving Big Brother: Performance, Privacy and Surveillance Space* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 7.

19 Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: the Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd edition (New York, NY and London: Free Association Books, 1999), p. 224.

an 'ontological security',[20] thanks to which they are convinced that what they are doing is right, and the humour arises from how wrong they are; Mark, on the other hand, has no such security.

In this way the programme can be seen as emblematic of the total and circulating mistrust and the culture of suspicion,[21] both significant consequences of aspects of the panopticism[22] of the surveillance society. Mark mistrusts everyone around him because he is aware that they are always watching and judging him, and therefore might expose him at any time. As *Peep Show*'s title lyric says, 'paranoia, paranoia, everybody's coming to get me'.[23] Yet, as Michel Foucault has argued, this surveillance does not reside merely in media technology and the viewing eyes of others; it becomes internalized to the point that any individual becomes their own observer, constantly watching and assessing their own actions. The interior monologues in *Peep Show* demonstrate this, as Mark and Jeremy question not only what they do, but also the seemingly instinctive and unconscious responses which may otherwise be deemed 'normal'. The consequence of the surveillance society is the mistrust of the self, in which we judge our own actions even more harshly than others might. In finding humour in the gap between its characters' instinctive interior monologue and the ways in which they choose to present themselves to the world, *Peep Show* clearly suggests that the interior monologue is a more 'truthful' representation of the characters, and we are meant to accept that what Mark and Jeremy *think* is more representative of their essential selves than what they *say*.[24] However, the programme also demonstrates that Mark and Jeremy do not believe this, and that, for them, their instinctive reactions are something to be interrogated, mistrusted, discarded and denied if they fail to conform to socially acceptable ways of being. Here, the power of the surveillance society to control and coerce, and the ways in which it encourages individuals to submit to the system, is made explicit.

This results, for the characters, in a complete absence of any moral code that might be based on their own ethical standpoints or a personal expression of what they feel is right or wrong. Mark assumes that everything he does or feels is socially wrong, and so measures the correctness of all his actions against the opinions and responses of those around him. At one point, Mark makes friends with Daryl, a new colleague at work, and his interior monologue tells us how he believes this to be a significant breakthrough in his acceptance by society: 'I've got a friend! I made a friend! Maybe there's nothing wrong with me and I'm just a normal human being!' However, it later emerges that this new friend is a racist, who condemns immigrants to Britain and spends his weekends participating in reenactments of World War II, in which he rather too enthusiastically takes the Nazi role. Mark becomes concerned because he feels these are wrong opinions to have, yet because of his failure to sustain any personal moral code, he can only believe that such racism is a 'bad thing' if everyone else in society tells him so. He questions his own responses, thinking: 'Or maybe I'm overreacting.

20 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p. 36.

21 See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77* (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 158, and David Lyon, *Surveillance after 9/11* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 10.

22 See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 195–228, and Miran Bozovic (ed.), *The Panopticon Writings* (London: Verso, 1995).

23 The song is 'Flagpole Sitta' by Harvey Danger, and was adopted as *Peep Show*'s theme tune from the second series onwards.

24 See John Ellis, *Visible Fictions* (London: Routledge, 1982), and John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 37–46 for discussion of how television suggests the voice is more 'authentic' than the image in this way.

Maybe everyone does it, and it's cool and Ali G and I'm just an old stick-in-the-mud, as usual.' In order to test whether Daryl's views are acceptable, he initiates a conversation with Jeremy using the kinds of terms he has been exposed to:

Mark:	Listen, I might pop down the . . . er . . . Chinky. Do you want anything?
Jeremy:	From . . . er . . . no, I'm all right, thanks.
Mark:	What about from . . . the . . . Paki shop? Do you want anything from in there?
Jeremy:	The 'Paki shop'?
Mark:	Yeah, I don't normally go there. They've always got that wog box on.
Jeremy:	Mark, what the hell are you talking about?
Mark:	Yeah, that's not on, is it?
Jeremy:	Well, no.
Mark:	And obviously you don't think there's a global Jewish conspiracy controlling everything?
Jeremy:	What, you mean, 'am I a racist?'
Mark:	Yeah. If you think that and say those things, you're a racist, aren't you?
Jeremy:	Well, yeah.

In this conversation, the ways in which surveillance society works are made explicit. Mark's moral code is one which sees the expression of racism as a bad thing not because there is anything inherently wrong with racism, but because it is socially unacceptable to think such things. In this way, morality is socially prescribed and not the response of intense introspection or a strong feeling about right and wrong in the world. Here Mark 'learns' what is 'right' and 'wrong' to say about race, resulting in a self-maintained mode of behaviour which is established solely by the fear of disapproval from others. Significantly, the others who may judge Mark are not those in authority – government, police or church. Mark does not ask whether it is illegal to say such things, just whether it is 'not on'. The yardstick by which morality is judged is its social acceptability to those around him. In this way, the surveillance society functions to control without an explicit display of authoritative power. It is a system which manages to constrain by inducing those within it to watch and condemn themselves and others; it is what Foucault has called 'a disciplinary society'.[25]

The humour in *Peep Show*, then, rests on this idea: that it is laughable to not know the socially acceptable way to behave or what is morally right or wrong. However, it also locates humour in the characters' inability to express themselves as they would most like, and shows them constantly censoring themselves in order to remain socially acceptable. In finding this funny the programme clearly marks such behaviour as deviant, while also suggesting that it is behaviour that the audience

25 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 216.

would be able to understand. That is, it is not so deviant that the motivation behind the characters becomes nonsensical and ruins the meaning of the comedy. It therefore mocks such deviancy while at the same time suggesting that it is something we can all relate to. This is an interestingly subtle indictment of the surveillance society, for the programme implies that everyone is constantly censoring their own thought processes, resulting in socially acceptable behaviour which nevertheless in no way approximates an accumulation of the kinds of behaviour which come most naturally. This is central to Erving Goffman's notion of performance, where there is 'a crucial discrepancy between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves'[26]. It is this discrepancy that *Peep Show* finds funny, both in its very existence and in the ways in which the characters pretend that no such discrepancy exists.

This disparity between forms of behaviour and acceptable codes of conduct has been at the core of British sitcom since its inception. Tony Hancock, for example, constantly worried about what those in power thought of him, and displayed fawning behaviour to the police, the military and the medical profession. Alf Garnett was intended to be funny because of the ludicrousness of the racist and bigoted views he presented, even if research has shown that audiences did not always read him that way.[27] And David Brent was funny because of his complete failure to understand the ways in which he was perceived, coupled with his unintentionally offensive statements about those around him.[28] What is noticeable in most sitcom is that the ways one might be judged are personified in particular characters, often representing significant institutions in society. The fear of being 'looked down on' by vicars, bosses, people in the military and others in power is at the core of sitcom, and these programmes thus lay bare the social structures which govern everyday life.[29] *Peep Show* sometimes functions in a similar way, for example Mark's behaviour is significantly modified whenever his boss is around. However, *Peep Show* also suggests that the institutions which force us to modify our behaviour do not have to be represented by particular people identified with them. Instead, it is *everyone* who is watching. This is the 'punitive city'[30] in which, 'The inculcation of moral self-regulation requires slow, painstaking and detailed work upon ourselves, a continuous and committed self-scrutiny'.[31] In this way, *Peep Show* shows the encroachment of the surveillance society in everyday life, because it is a sitcom which does not generally include the authoritative characters which have traditionally been vital to the genre. Instead, it demonstrates that those authorities have become internalized, and relies on the knowledge that everyone believes they are being watched and judged, thus internalizing the regulatory process.

The disciplinary relationship between those who watch and those who are seen is similar to the relationship between the teller and the butt of a joke. That is, humour often works to align the teller of a joke with its recipient, uniting them in their ridicule of someone or something else,

26 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p. 63.

27 Richard P. Adler (ed.), *All in the Family: a Critical Appraisal* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1979).

28 Brett Mills, *Television Sitcom* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p. 60–66.

29 Stephen Wagg (ed.), *Because I Tell a Joke or Two: Comedy, Politics and Social Difference* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1998) contains essays showing this phenomenon in terms of class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and nation.

30 Foucault, '*Discipline and Punish*, p. 113.

31 Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: a Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 218.

mocking the outsider and defining more concretely their outsider status.[32] Hence humour must necessarily work from an assumption that certain kinds of behaviour are normal – or, at least, socially acceptable – and that deviation from that behaviour is not only funny but worthy of laughter. Mark's fear that people will mock his misshaped testicles and Jeremy's concern that people will laugh at his music show how they are aware that humour is an inevitable response to any kind of difference or incompetence. Social behaviour is often an attempt, then, to establish a position as either the teller of or audience for the joke, in order to avoid becoming its butt.

Sitcom has traditionally been shot to demonstrate this; conventionally, it has placed audiences where 'the operations of the narrative and the "points" of the jokes make sense'.[33] While this is true for most narrative forms on television, sitcom has more clearly signalled its intentions in constructing a particular, unified audience position. The conventional 'three-headed monster'[34] shooting style of sitcom is designed to capture the particular performative pleasures of comedy. However, its overt theatricality also produces television in which the intention of making an audience laugh is displayed in a much more explicit manner than in other genres. For traditional sitcom, the visual signifiers of realism and believability – such as certain lighting styles, a complex narrative space and naturalist performances – have often been sidelined in the name of comedy.[35] Sitcom appears to be more obviously 'performed' than other television genres precisely because it is. It necessarily acknowledges the audience, whose very existence justifies the performative nature of the text. The most obvious way in which this has been done is through the laughter track, perhaps the most explicit generic signifier of sitcom. The laughter track utterly undermines any verisimilitude which sitcom may attempt, because it acknowledges the (theatrical) audience. This is not to suggest that other fictional genres are not constructed in the name of the audience's pleasure; rather it is to say that sitcom happily and openly admits that this is its primary purpose, and thus acknowledges, within the text, the audience for whom the jokes are performed.

Therefore, the position offered by sitcom is one in which characters and events are usually offered up to be laughed *at*, rather than *with*. While there are a number of sitcom characters who possess an emotional and narrative complexity that invites audience empathy and engagement, this is in addition to, rather than a necessary component of, their 'funniness'. We may find a sitcom character interesting, sympathetic and engaging, but it is unlikely that we will continue to tune in unless, primarily, we find them funny. Sitcom's laughter track consolidates this, with the text itself signalling what and when characters' activities are humorous. Thus the laughter track not only demonstrates what is to be laughed *at*, but also shows that hundreds of other people in a studio audience – and, by implication, millions of people at home – also find such things funny. It is the 'electronic substitute for collective experience'.[36] If Mark and Jeremy in *Peep Show* worry that what they do and think may be laughed

32 See, for example: Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004); A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London: Cohen and West, 1952), pp. 90–107; Christie Davies, *Ethnic Humor Around the World: a Comparative Analysis* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).

33 Barry Curtis, 'Aspects of sitcom', in Jim Cook (ed.), *BFI Dossier 17: Television Sitcom* (London: British Film Institute, 1982), p. 9.

34 Patricia Mellencamp, *High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age and Comedy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 322.

35 See Stephen Lacey, 'Becoming popular: some reflections on the relationship between television and theatre', in Jonathan Bignell and Stephen Lacey (eds), *Popular Television Drama: Critical Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 206–10.

36 Andy Medhurst and Lucy Tuck, 'The gender game', in Cook (ed.), *BFI Dossier 17*, p. 45.

at, it could be because decades of sitcom have shown that this is the most common reaction the public has to certain forms of behaviour. While Mark and Jeremy might overstate the condemnatory aspect of such laughter, it is clear that one way in which they might learn the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour is through the consumption of media texts which work from an assumption that the vast majority of the public finds certain thoughts, responses and actions (laughably) deviant. The *sound* of laughter as a condemnatory phenomenon demonstrates its social nature. After all, humour and laughter are not the same thing, and one does not necessarily follow the other. The fact that 'most laughter is not a response to jokes or other formal attempts at humor'[37] shows that the noise is not a necessary response to finding something funny, but instead a powerful signal to others that deviant behaviour has occurred; it is a 'visible punishment' (to be more accurate, it is a visual *and aural* punishment).[38]

This argument has underscored much critical analysis of sitcom, which suggests that it helps define social acceptability and 'affirm the status quo rather than to call it into question'.[39] For centuries theorists have argued that humour helps define social boundaries, and can be used to push wrongdoers back in line.[40] Indeed, Aristotle argued that it should be used explicitly for this purpose.[41] While contemporary satire clearly has such a didactic purpose, most comedy programme makers would argue that what they produce is not intended as a social critique, and instead merely reflects and draws upon what society generally finds funny.[42] However, it has been shown that the limited ways in which particular groups and lifestyles are demonstrated to be funny by comedy are aligned with broader social ideologies.[43] Sitcom, then, has been critiqued as a form which helps to reinforce dominant social ideologies, and, in its widespread broadcasting, use of laughter tracks and position of 'spectatorial superiority'[44] from which behaviour can be laughed *at*, it cannot acknowledge the possibility that some viewers may not find such things funny.

Yet *Peep Show*'s visual style alters the relationship the audience has with the programme's characters. While I am not arguing that in its use of point-of-view the programme completely and unproblematically manages to align its audience with the experience of 'being' the characters, it certainly offers a different relationship than that established by the 'three-headed monster' viewing position. In traditional sitcom, the characters are, on the whole, unaware that they might be being laughed at because, very often, they are unaware that they are being watched; that is, the audience and the laughter track are extradiegetic components of the text. Of course, Mark and Jeremy do not 'know' that a television audience has access to what they see and think, but in using point-of-view and an interior voiceover, the programme refuses to offer the audience an uncomplicated external position from which the jokes make sense. In traditional sitcom we can laugh at the characters with no fear that they might laugh back at us. While the *Peep Show* characters cannot

37 Robert R. Provine, *Laughter: a Scientific Investigation* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2001), p. 42.

38 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 113.

39 Robin Nelson, 'They do 'like it up 'em': *Dad's Army* and myths of Old England', in Bignell and Lacey (eds), *Popular Television Drama*, p. 58.

40 See Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (London: Sage, 2005) for a thorough summary of this literature.

41 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 194.

42 This has certainly been my finding in research interviews I have recently undertaken with members of the British television comedy industry; see 'Funny business research project', Arts and Humanities Research Council Ref. APN19118.

43 This discussion has particularly focused on issues of race, gender, and sexuality. On race, see: Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences and the Myth of the American Dream* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), and Robin R. Means Coleman, *African American Viewers and the Black Situation Comedy: Situating Racial Humor* (New York, NY: Garland, 2000). On gender, see: Frances Gray, *Women and Laughter* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Mellencamp, 'High anxiety'. On sexuality, see: Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow, 'Gay characters in conventional spaces: *Will and Grace* and the situation comedy genre', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 19, no. 1, (2002), pp. 87–105; Anna McCarthy, '"Must see" queer TV: history and serial form in *Ellen*', in Mark Jancovich and James Lyons (eds), *Quality Popular Television: Cult TV, the Industry and Fans* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), pp. 88–102.

44 Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 73.

laugh at us directly, we are offered multiple viewing positions which do not add up to the detached, extradiegetic position provided by the 'three-headed monster'. As an audience we find the behaviour of Mark and Jeremy laughable in comparison to 'normal' forms of behaviour. However, through their internal monologues and the depiction of their struggle against instinctive desires, the artificial nature of such social strictures is demonstrated and found laughable in itself. The ethical codes to which Mark must learn to conform are not, as in traditional sitcom, presented as unquestionably preexistent, and certainly not self-evidently 'right'. Instead, the programme depicts them as noticeably artificial codes whose meaning and power are merely a consequence of their recirculation within society. Therefore, in adopting a point-of-view shooting style and allowing the audience to hear the internal monologue of the characters, the programme manages to depict social convention as itself laughable, and forces the audience out of a 'privileged',[45] unquestioning and unified position of superiority traditionally offered by sitcom. The programme's lack of a laughter track similarly allows for polysemic readings, as it fails to signal concretely what is supposedly unquestionably funny.[46]

The programme can therefore be placed within recent trends in media representation which have begun to undermine the audience position commonly offered by television. This suggests that while the surveillance society has been seen as a powerful way to control individuals, the adoption by individuals and groups of the technology central to the surveillance society has made it possible, to some extent, for a range of personal and social material that was hitherto private to become public. Blogs and personal webpages on the internet have allowed 'alternative lifestyles' to reach the mainstream and, more importantly, redefined to some extent the distinction between who gets to produce and who gets to consume. This has also been related to the development of reality television which, while embroiled within debates about exploitation and underhand editing, has also allowed the representation of a broader range of lifestyles, and, perhaps more importantly, demonstrated that 'it is almost impossible to have a fully unified, completed and coherent "self"; rather, we all tend to have fleeting, multiple and contradictory selves'.[47] In doing so, it has started to undermine the apparent coherence of 'common-sense' positions and ethics which have been at the core of television for decades.

Indeed, in *Peep Show* Jeremy applies to go on *Big Brother*. We see clips of his application video, in which he portrays himself as 'funny' and 'wacky', demonstrated by his smashing of a watermelon with a hammer. It is clearly a performance, but the kind of performance he assumes is wanted by the programme makers, that is, 'the performances we are required to make in a surveillance society'.[48] Unlike Mark, Jeremy is clearly comfortable with the surveillance society, offering himself up to be filmed again and again. In distinguishing between the performance he produces for the audition tape and the 'truth' of his internal monologue,

45 Ibid., p. 185.

46 Of course, *Peep Show* is not the only recent British sitcom to not have a laughter track; indeed, there seems to be a general move towards its abandonment within much of the industry.

47 Charles Cheung, 'A home on the web: presentations of self on personal pages', in David Gauntlett (ed.), *Web.Studies: Rewiring Media Studies for the Digital Age* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 45.

48 Palmer, *Discipline and Liberty*, p. 183.

Peep Show implies that many members of the public have indeed internalized the disciplinary consequences of being looked at but are happy to provide a performance which is at odds with the internal 'truth' of the self. From this perspective, being seen is here not a prison but a liberation, and portrays 'submission to comprehensive forms of monitoring as a form of empowerment and self-expression'.[49] In this way, Jeremy is the antithesis of Mark, who would rather not be seen at all. The two therefore demonstrate the contradictory responses on offer to (male) citizens living within a surveillance society, both of which require a performance of social acceptability which is significantly at odds with the internal reality of the self.

However, while Jeremy's and Mark's reactions to the possibility of being seen are quite different, they are aligned once the fear of mockery arises. Their internal monologues repeatedly demonstrate that being laughed at by others is a hurtful and demeaning process, and that conforming to social norms is the most effective way to prevent oneself from being the butt of the joke. This means that theories of the surveillance society which argue that being *looked* at is a major controlling phenomenon within contemporary industrialized societies might be missing one of the more subtle and innocuous ways in which everyday interactions help to police social norms. After all, *Peep Show* and the sitcom suggest that while it is possible to adopt a range of strategies in order to manage the difficulties of ever-present observation, the fear of being *laughed* at may be the most significant form of societal policing, for its complexities, subtleties and consequences ensure its presence is inescapable in all social interactions.

49 Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: the Work of Being Watched* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 14.

Bette Davis: introduction

MARTIN SHINGLER

Bette Davis (1908-89) was one of America's greatest and most original screen performers, appearing in eighty-nine films between 1931 and 1988. After a brief spell with Universal Studios in 1931, she became a contract player for Warner Bros, the studio that made her a star. During her eighteen years with the company (1931 to 1949) she made fifty-four movies, winning Academy Awards for her performances in *Dangerous* (Alfred E. Green, 1935) and *Jezebel* (William Wyler, 1938). In 1939 she consolidated her status as Hollywood's leading female film star with some of her finest films: *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding), *The Old Maid* (Edmund Goulding) and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz). Throughout World War II she achieved a succession of critical and commercial hits, including *The Letter* (William Wyler, 1940), *The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, 1941) and *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), all receiving Oscar nominations, followed by *Old Acquaintance* (Vincent Sherman, 1943) and *Mr Skeffington* (Vincent Sherman, 1944). Even after her market value had fallen and her contract with Warner Bros had been terminated, she continued to produce remarkable and acclaimed performances in such films as *All About Eve* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1950), *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962), *The Anniversary* (Roy Ward Baker, 1968) and *The Whales of August* (Lindsay Anderson, 1987). Even today, nineteen years after her death, interest in her and her work remains strong. Each year she attracts new fans around the world, who discover her films at art-house cinemas, on university courses, on television, on DVD and websites. While she has become a legendary figure in film history, her films have played a seminal role in studies of classical Hollywood cinema, melodrama, stardom, screen acting, gender and queer theory.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn005

2008 marks the centenary of her birth, providing an opportunity to consider the lasting value of her work. In these three essays we consider the appeal and significance of some of her most important films, examining her reputation as a great actor, her appeal for British film critics and audiences in the 1940s and for gay men ever since. Through a mixture of textual analysis, historical research into film reception, personal interview and queer theory, this dossier details the significance of Davis as a performer, a star, a role model and a gay icon. In so doing, we hope to shed new light on her distinctiveness as a Hollywood movie queen.

Bette Davis: actor/star

MARTIN SHINGLER and CHRISTINE GLEDHILL

> Performances by Hollywood stars in particular are prized not for the craftsmanship but for the glimpses they offer of the idealized person behind the performance. Film stars function as social hieroglyphs, objects of desire, and sites of identity construction. Film narratives activate complex subjective processes in so far as they effectively circulate a culture's understanding of the human figure, countenance and psyche.[1]

This astute observation has much to tell us about the nature of Hollywood stardom in the studio era and, in relation to such stars as Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford and Judy Garland, it is both insightful and persuasive. However, at first sight it seems problematic when applied to one of the USA's greatest film stars, Bette Davis. For in Davis's case, acting featured as a major part of her public image, with discussion of her craft figuring as a key component of her star discourse. This essay, then, explores the apparent paradox of an acting style dedicated to the visible production of different characters from film to film that yet gave rise to a level of coherence capable of sustaining a star image. We shall be using the terms 'personality,' 'persona' and 'image' to describe Davis's star identity, and as they are complex, interrelated and, to some extent, interchangeable, it is worth defining what we mean by them. We take 'personality' to be a collection of surface traits by which a person becomes known (that is, the psychological, cognitive, emotional and physical characteristics of an individual). 'Persona' we understand to be a more crafted and consolidated public projection of the person, in which film roles and media appearances play a part in creating the mask that ensures consistency, which can be used as an element of performance. Closely related is the concept of 'image', which we consider to be

1 Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke, 'Capturing natural behavior on film?', *Theatre Annual*, vol. 59 (2006), p. 90.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn006

detachable from the star as a person. This contains some star attributes and aspects of roles but also what is circulated in publicity, what is said and valued or criticized in reviews. This is the conceptualization of critics, fans and the public, projecting onto the star specific ideals, aspirations, desires, and so on.

In the mid 1930s Davis acquired the reputation of being one of Hollywood's finest actors, her talent showcased by Warner Bros in a series of star vehicles, many adapted from successful Broadway plays. These were much praised, receiving major awards from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. They also attracted huge numbers of moviegoers, making them some of the biggest box-office hits of the late 1930s and early-to-mid 1940s. By 1939 Davis was widely considered one of the greatest living actresses in the USA, lauded as the Sarah Bernhardt of the screen.[2] This reputation was largely based on her performances in films such as *Of Human Bondage* (John Cromwell, 1934), *Dangerous* (Alfred E. Green, 1935), *Marked Woman* (Lloyd Bacon, 1937), *Jezebel* (William Wyler, 1938), *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939) and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz, 1939), a reputation augmented by subsequent performances in *The Letter* (William Wyler, 1940), *The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, 1941) and *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942).[3] In these films, Davis produced a highly visible form of acting: full bodied and emphatic, with a recognizable set of techniques, commonly referred to as her 'mannerisms'.

> The Davis style consists in a deliberate, clipped vocal inflection; darting eye movements and penetrating stares; a swinging, striding walk; gestures such as clenching fists and sudden, intense drags on cigarettes; and quick shifts in mood and register. . . . Her performances are 'bravura' – they call attention to their own skill and display pleasure in it.[4]

The visibility of Davis's acting also resulted from the attention given to it in both studio publicity (such as posters, advertisements, magazine articles and interviews) and in reviews in the press. Maria LaPlace's examination of her publicity between 1934 and 1942 reveals the persistent assertion that Davis 'is a great artist and not just a mere movie star'.[5] While Greta Garbo's and Marlene Dietrich's star status rested largely on their beauty, glamour, sexual allure, mystery, charm and charisma, Davis (supposedly lacking these qualities) achieved stardom, success and recognition through her ability to create credible characters, to engage her audience emotionally (usually provoking tears) and to produce original, compelling and dramatic performances. In the early 1930s she was cast in roles of limited scope and subjected to the fast and furious pace that typified the Warners' house style, both factors militating against the display of acting skill. However, when Davis was loaned out to RKO in 1934 to support Leslie Howard in *Of Human*

2 Review of *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *Motion Picture Daily*, 28 September 1939.

3 Davis won Oscars for her performances in *Dangerous* (1935) and *Jezebel* (1938) and was nominated for *Dark Victory* (1939), *The Letter* (1940), *The Little Foxes* (1941) and *Now, Voyager* (1942).

4 Maria LaPlace, 'Producing and consuming the woman's film: discursive struggle in *Now, Voyager*', in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987) p. 147.

5 Ibid., p. 149.

Bondage, she worked with a director who for the first time was interested in capturing her intensity as a performer. John Cromwell ensured that the nuances of her physical movements were not edited out in the interests of fast-paced narration. Consequently, critics and audiences were able to see what Davis was capable of as a performer as she drew upon her background in interpretative dance to embody the complex and conflicting emotions of the vile, self-destructive Cockney waitress Mildred Rogers. Critics were astonished and surprised by the results,[6] describing her as 'a new kind of Bette Davis'.[7] Some even judged her performance to be one of the best by an American actress, many believing that she deserved an Oscar.[8]

Of Human Bondage was a significant moment in Davis's transition from contract player to star, after which, Cathy Klaprat suggests, Warners abandoned its attempt to market her as yet another sexy platinum blonde, shifting the emphasis of her publicity.

> The 'Universal Train Story', a Davis myth popular with the fan magazines, is typical. The story and its variations tell us that when Davis first went to Hollywood, Universal sent a representative to meet her at the train station. But the man saw no one who resembled a glamorous movie actress so Bette went unrecognized and unmet. Another version recalls that Carl Laemmle, Jr, the head of Universal, considered Davis 'about as attractive as Slim Summerville' (a skinny, homely comedian).[9]

These anecdotes were retold from this time on, in magazine articles from the mid 1930s through to the 1950s, in her autobiography of 1962 and in biographies,[10] television documentaries and talk shows. Such stories were used to reaffirm the notion that Davis's difference from other female stars – her uniqueness as an emerging star – resided in her very lack of beauty and sex appeal. After 1934, Davis's difference was further and crucially established by an emphasis on her remarkable talent as an actor, evident, Klaprat shows, in publicity that incorporated an increasing emphasis on her growing status as one of the USA's greatest actors.[11] Instrumental in this process was her role in *Dangerous* as a talented but self-destructive stage actress, Joyce Heath. This character was closely associated with the real-life actress Jeanne Eagels, who made her name as Sadie Thompson in the 1922 Broadway production of Somerset Maugham's *Rain*, achieving equal acclaim for her screen portrayal of Leslie Crosbie in Maugham's *The Letter*.[12] Eagels was posthumously nominated for an Oscar for this role after her untimely death in October 1929 at the age of thirty-nine, reportedly due to a drug overdose. Joyce Heath's story is not exactly that of Eagels but it is close, incorporating several references to her in the dialogue. In *Dangerous*, Davis plays a down-and-out alcoholic whose highly successful stage career has been ruined by a string of bad luck, leaving her defeated until architect and socialite Don Bellows (Franchot Tone) picks her up out of the gutter, restores her health and confidence and orchestrates her return to the

6 The critic on *Motion Picture Herald* stated that 'The picture is convincingly acted and directed, with Bette Davis proving a surprise', 7 July 1934, p. 24.

7 *Variety*, 3 July 1934, p. 26.

8 When the Academy failed to nominate her for this award in the spring of 1935, a write-in campaign was organized to persuade the judges to change their minds. Despite its failure, Davis won many admirers and considerable public sympathy.

9 Cathy Klaprat. 'The star as market strategy: Bette Davis in another light', in Tino Balio (ed.), *The American Film Industry*, revised edition (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 361.

10 See Whitney Stine, *Mother Goddam: the Story of the Career of Bette Davis* (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, 1974); Charles Higham, *Bette* (London: New English Library, 1981), Lawrence J. Quirk, *Fasten your Seatbelts: the Passionate Life of Bette Davis* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1990); Barbara Leaming, *Bette Davis: a Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1992).

11 Klaprat, 'The star as market strategy', p. 366.

12 Produced by Paramount, directed by Jean DeLimur and released in April 1929.

stage. For Davis this was the chance to display her dramatic artistry via every imaginable state and emotion, presenting her with the challenge of playing a woman supposed to be one of the US theatre's most talented performers.

'Bette Davis Triumphs in "Dangerous" Film' announced the headline of Kate Cameron's review in New York's *Daily News*.[13] In the following day's edition of the *New York Post*, Irene Thirer declared that Davis's 'portrayal of the varying moods of this unhappy Joyce Heath is even better than her memorable performance in "Of Human Bondage"'.[14] *Dangerous* marked the achievement that Davis had been working towards. Earlier attempts to construct and market her as a star had largely failed, with audiences and critics greeting such films as *Ex-Lady* (Robert Floret, 1933), *Fog Over Frisco* (William Dieterle, 1934), *The Girl From 10th Avenue* (Alfred E. Green, 1935), *Front Page Woman* (Michael Curtiz, 1935) and *Special Agent* (William Keighley, 1935) with either indifference or scorn. Joyce Heath was Davis's first leading role to succeed with both moviegoers and reviewers. Not that all the reviewers were as ecstatic as Cameron and Thirer, with some suggesting that Davis was unconvincing when performing lighter and more subdued emotions.[15] Such criticism was silenced, however, when Warners released *The Petrified Forest* at the Radio City Music Hall in New York on 6 February 1936, with Davis appearing as the demure and idealistic waitress/artist Gabby opposite Leslie Howard in Archie Mayo's production of Robert Sherwood's well-known play. The following month she won her first Oscar for *Dangerous* (awarded on 5 March 1936), enhancing her star status and confirming her standing as a leading screen performer. When she appeared as Mary Dwight in *Marked Woman* (Lloyd Bacon, 1937) virtually all the reviews described the film as a 'Bette Davis picture', making relatively little mention of Humphrey Bogart, whose role was at least equal to hers. Frank S. Nugent declared in *The New York Times* that 'Miss Davis has turned in her best performance since she cut Leslie Howard to the quick in "Of Human Bondage"'.[16] *Variety* suggested that 'Regardless of what happens to the picture financially, it cannot help but react favourably to Miss Davis'.[17] In the same year, she contributed a chapter on the role of the film actress to a book entitled *We Make The Movies*.[18] The choice of Davis indicated – and reinforced – her preeminence within the US film industry, signifying her authority as one of the country's leading actors.

After 1937 the 'Bette Davis film' went from strength to strength, with Davis appearing in a succession of maternal melodramas and historical costume romances (primarily 'weepies') aimed at women. These included *Jezebel*, *The Sisters* (Anatole Litvak, 1938), *The Old Maid* (Edmund Goulding, 1939), *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *All This and Heaven Too* (Anatole Litvak, 1940), *The Little Foxes* and *Now, Voyager*. These films were prestige productions, with Davis billed above the title and taking the leading role performing a series of heroines and anti-heroines. Some were vulnerable victims and others

13 Kate Cameron, 'Bette Davis triumphs in "Dangerous" film', *Daily News*, 26 December 1935.

14 Irene Thirer, Review of *Dangerous*, *New York Post*, 27 December 1935. From this time on, *Of Human Bondage* was consistently used as a benchmark for Davis's best performances in both reviews and publicity.

15 *Variety*, 1 January 1936, p. 44.

16 Frank S. Nugent, Review of *Marked Woman*, *The New York Times*, 12 April 1937, p. 15.

17 Anon., Review of *Marked Woman*, *Variety*, 14 April 1937, p. 12.

18 Bette Davis, 'The actress plays her part', in Nancy Naumberg (ed.), *We Make the Movies* (W.W. Norton & Co, 1937), pp. 177–30.

were cold-hearted calculating bitches, all brought to life through intelligent characterization and meticulously orchestrated performances. Critics repeatedly compared her to leading stage actresses, such as Lynn Fontanne[19] and Katharine Cornell.[20] Warners' strategy of casting Davis in films based on successful Broadway plays demonstrated their confidence in her abilities as an actor and signified a belief in the commercial potential of a star whose principal distinguishing feature was her ability to act.

By 1938 Davis was undisputedly both actor and star. This raises the crucial question of how she was able to unite these two facets. How did her star vehicles enable her to unite visible acting and stardom, to make acting the sign of a self rather than the dissembling of a person? At this time Davis appeared to be capable of using gesture, body, voice and words to articulate a clear and forceful identity, one of the most forceful and distinctive identities in Hollywood. Despite – or because of – the wide range of roles she played and the clearly evident performance skills involved, one of the greatest accomplishments of Davis and her scriptwriters was to make visible acting operate as a metaphor for human identity and, in the process, embody the condition of performance as a process of self-making. In so doing, she appealed strongly to those among moviegoers (such as the gay and lesbian community or women) for whom 'performing' as the projection of identity was a regular feature of their social existence.[21] At the same time, as Mark Glancy shows, her 'mannerisms' were particularly well received by British audiences and critics, receptive as British culture was to heightened performance.[22] In this respect, nationally differentiated performance values illuminate the acting/stardom paradox. Britain's investment in social difference and its cultural obsession with role-playing (most notably, the articulation of class distinctions) led to a high value for visible acting. By contrast, the USA's star system arose from the national ideology of the democratic melting pot and consequent elision of social difference. Hollywood stars collapsed performance and self and, promising access to the person, authenticated individual personality beyond a social role. Bette Davis is puzzling precisely because acting is so much a part of her image and she is clearly such a skilled and showy performer that it might be assumed that her star status would be undercut.

Davis's role as Leslie Crosbie in *The Letter* provides an insight into how she operated simultaneously as actor and star, not only through performance but also in the storyline. In the film's climactic scene, her character finally breaks down, admitting that with all her heart she still loves the man she killed. It is probably the most dramatic moment – and certainly the most dramatic line of dialogue – in the film. Her desire for the man she shot repeatedly in the opening scene and of whose murder she has been exonerated (acquitted by a jury and forgiven by her husband on the grounds that she was defending her honour) suddenly resurfaces

19 Lynn Fontanne had famously made the role of Queen Elizabeth I her own on stage in 1930 in Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth, the Queen*, until Davis made *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* in 1939.

20 When Davis played Leslie Crosbie in the screen version of Somerset Maugham's *The Letter* in 1940, she performed one of the most successful stage roles of Katharine Cornell, widely regarded as the USA's greatest stage actress.

21 See Ed Sikov's contribution to the dossier in this issue for a discussion of the appeal of Davis's visible (and audible) acting for gay men, past and present.

22 See Mark Glancy's contribution to the dossier in this issue.

during a moment of marital reconciliation. The calm, cool facade she has maintained through a succession of increasingly stressful and emotionally charged scenes is shattered in an instant. Davis's performance is not only a *tour de force* of acting but reveals 'acting' as the core of the character who has until now taken in the jury, her spouse and – to a degree – the audience. Having shouted her dreadful admission into her husband's face she throws herself sobbing onto the couch until she regains enough composure to venture out alone into the moonlit garden where her fate (in the form of a dagger wielded by the murdered man's widow) awaits her. Once her guilty secret has been revealed there is only one possible outcome, her death.

Bette Davis as Leslie Crombie, a natural-born actress and consummate liar, in *The Letter* (Willam Wyler, 1940)

The Letter provided Davis with one of her most ambitious and successful vehicles, demonstrating the subtlety and force of her acting while offering a solution to the tension between character acting and star image. For this film consolidated an evolving screen persona based on duality – the suffering sensitive victim and the callous bitch, here personified in a single character – and foregrounded acting as a necessary element of the characterization. Leslie Crosbie was one of Davis's most complex characters: a respectable middle-class English woman who was also a calculating murderous adulterer. Her complexity also resided in the fact that while much is revealed about her she nonetheless remains inscrutable. Leslie's character may be gradually unravelled and exposed, her darkest secrets revealed in the course of the plot, but even so she remains a mystery. Indeed, through the work of Davis as actor/star, she *becomes* a mystery. While at the start of the film she seems to be a fairly ordinary woman of her type (or class), with the exception of being able to shoot a man full of bullets, by the end she has

become an extraordinary person, possessing all manner of hidden qualities. However, the more we learn about her the less we seem to know her. The same might be said of Bette Davis. The more she appeared on screen in each new film and the more that was written about her by publicists, reviewers, critics and journalists, the less understandable – or transparent – she became for her fans. By the late 1930s Davis was known to be talented, determined, down-to-earth and dedicated to her work. Maria LaPlace writes that her image was 'strongly marked by attributes of strength and independence', constructed in publicity materials 'through the depiction of Davis as anti-glamour and anti-consumerism, eschewing all the trappings of stardom'.[23] As part of this discourse, Davis's sexuality was called into question:

> On the one hand, questions are raised about Davis's desirability to and for men. . . . On the other hand, her transgressiveness is reinforced in more positive ways for women. Thus, while doubt is cast on whether she is sexually passionate in her marriages – Davis divorced and remarried during this period – a more companionate and egalitarian idea of marriage . . . emerges, and passion is shifted to the realm of work and creativity.[24]

Despite Davis's public image of female strength, determination, independence and professionalism, there remained something unfathomable about her private self: namely, her passions and sexuality. Each new 'Bette Davis film' promised to reveal another facet of the star's personality in order to entice her fans back to the cinema. Indeed, the US star system was built on this very premiss, as Richard de Cordova explains in his book *Picture Personalities*,[25] in which he argues that the development of the star system involved the gradual deepening of the 'secret' contained in stars: from (originally) their name, to their film personality, to the person behind the films. The ultimate secret, De Cordova argues, is sexuality, subscribing to Foucault's theory set out in his *History of Sexuality*.[26] The secret in *The Letter* may indeed be Leslie's sexuality or, rather, her possessive and voracious sexual longing for a man that she cannot have, not only because her role as a married woman forbids it but also because the man in question no longer reciprocates her feelings. It seems logical to assume that the secret at the heart of the film is the sordid nature lurking behind the respectable middle-class English facade, but this should not obscure the fact that Leslie has other secrets. For Leslie is not as she appears, some simple housewife, sheltered and supported by her husband. That may be her social role, which she performs with consummate skill, but there is far more to her. Not only can she handle a gun, she is also an accomplished actress. Her husband, friends and associates have no idea that Leslie has a great gift: she can lie convincingly, as she demonstrates when she relates the events that led up to the fatal shooting, reenacting each movement, gesture and word that was spoken by herself and the man she kills. Later this is revealed to have been an elaborate hoax, her supposed reenactment

23 LaPlace, 'Producing and consuming the woman's film', p. 148.

24 Ibid., p. 149.

25 Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: the Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois, 1990) p. 140.

26 Ibid., p. 140.

of the events actually an enactment, an impressive performance by a skilled performer. As the film progresses, Leslie produces one lie after another. What is exposed during the course of the film is not just Leslie's sexuality (which is soon revealed) but rather that her entire persona is a fabrication, an intricate patchwork of lies. For this reason the revelation of her sexuality does not expose Leslie's true nature. By the end of the film, her sexuality has been repeatedly revealed but neither the audience nor the other characters in the film are any closer to knowing her. The only thing that has been established with any certainty is the extent of her ability to tell lies and to perform them with a remarkable degree of skill.

Lying proved to be one of the most dominant themes of the Bette Davis film. A pattern can be discerned from her first successful star-establishing film, *Dangerous*, onwards. Throughout this film Joyce Heath consistently *performs* her lies, convincing Don Bellows of whatever she wants him to believe. The theme reemerges at the end of *Jezebel*, when Julie Marsden lies about her feelings for Preston Dillard (Henry Fonda) to his wife Amy (Margaret Lindsay) so that she can accompany him to the fever colony and execute her great personal sacrifice in the name of true love. It is seen again at the end of *Dark Victory*, when Judith Traherne pretends to her husband that she has not lost her sight and is not facing imminent death, this deceit enabling him to attend an important medical conference. It reappears in *The Old Maid*, when Davis adopts the role of a prickly spinster aunt so that her illegitimate daughter will never suspect that she is actually her mother. It resurfaces later, after *The Letter*, in *The Great Lie* (Edmund Goulding, 1941) when Davis's character conceals the fact that her son is not really her child but that of her husband (George Brent) and his former lover (Mary Astor). It pervades such films as *In This Our Life* (1942), *A Stolen Life* (1946) and, perhaps most notably, *Deception* (1946).

While Davis, the actor, laboured to produce great performances in her films, her characters frequently made strenuous efforts to sustain an important lie. Often the whole dynamic of the narrative was organized around the length of time she could maintain the pretence and put off the critical revelation. By repeatedly involving Davis in scenarios of lying, Warners devised the perfect vehicle for her acting. Her emphatic performance style found some justification in the fact that her characters were supposed to be performing, hence behaving unnaturally. Davis frequently portrayed characters whose actions were unnatural in the sense of being unmotivated by genuine feeling and conviction. In such scenarios she was required to convey the falsity of these attitudes, actions and emotions while making audiences believe that, despite their lack of sincerity, the other characters in the drama accepted them as authentic. Davis's creation of a series of consummate liars during the late 1930s and 1940s ensured her growth as an actor while maintaining her status as a

star. What Davis was revealing, bit by bit and from role to role, was not the secret of her own personality – which, according to De Cordova, was the convention for Hollywood stars – but rather the secret of personality itself: that it is a fabrication, designed, constructed and performed. Fans who sensed that their own identities were largely built on lies and performance – that social, familial and personal roles were dutifully performed – were likely to get the most satisfaction from a Bette Davis film. Meanwhile, Davis could realize her ambition of creating fine and distinctive performances while maintaining her status as one Hollywood's most successful stars.

Leslie Crosbie in *The Letter*, like so many of Davis's characters, had a secret: she was a great actress masquerading as an ordinary housewife. In contrast, Davis's acting ability was no secret, nor was the fact that offscreen she considered herself to be an ordinary Yankee housewife. What her fans did not know was which of the two incarnations of 'Bette Davis' came closest to the real thing. Throughout her career, her persona remained ambiguous in all sorts of ways. Was she a ruthlessly ambitious egocentric diva, devastatingly rude and cruel? Or was she a self-critical perfectionist, beset by anxieties and insecurities, someone who simply wanted to do the best she could? By never fully revealing herself, Bette Davis the Star sustained the interest of her fans and compelled them to see her films. Contradiction and ambiguity remained essential to her star status, Davis's visible acting preventing audiences from fully getting to know her as a person. In recognizing her familiar 'mannerisms', audiences *could* perceive Bette Davis the Actor. While Bette Davis the Star remained unknowable, Bette Davis the Actor was easily discernible. Even the actress herself described her own persistent awareness of this person within her performances. In her autobiography, she wrote:

> I was never completely Mildred ... or any other character. I was always Bette Davis watching herself become another person. We all, on occasion, find ourselves involved in a character that strikes a painfully personal chord. It is then that we must be ruthless with ourselves.[27]

27 Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962) p. 178.

While performing, Davis ruthlessly guarded against the exposure of her own identity, which might so easily have been revealed due to her identification with her roles. Instead, she presented Bette Davis the Actor as a mask to conceal her self, shifting attention to the performance. Her success indicated the value of performed identity, the virtue of transforming the otherwise formless mess of consciousness, feelings, intuitions, and so on, into a clear and forceful identity, however mannered. Davis, through her visible acting, embodied as much as anything else the condition of performance as a process of self-making, and this, for many, could provide both comfort and inspiration. Where other Hollywood stars were prized 'for the glimpses they offer[ed] of the idealized person behind the performance', Davis was prized for her performances and her craftsmanship.[28] Nevertheless, despite the centrality of acting to her public profile, she still fulfilled her essential

28 Baron and Carnicke, 'Capturing natural behavior on film?', p. 90.

function as a Hollywood star. She became a social hieroglyph, an object of desire and a site of identity construction – most notably as the 'independent woman'. Moreover, the narratives of her films propagated a cultural understanding of the human figure as an effective subject. This both acknowledged and reinforced the idea of constructed identity as central to human experience and subjectivity, affirming its social value. Consequently, Davis's success invited not only adulation but also emulation. Indeed, her imitators have proliferated, following emphatically in the footsteps of this hip-swinging actress with her staccato speech, her glaring eyes and her fidgeting fingers. In many respects, there could never be only one Bette Davis.

'What would Bette Davis do?' British reactions to Bette Davis in the 1940s: a case study of *Now, Voyager*

MARK GLANCY

During the 1940s, Britain had a 'special relationship' with Bette Davis. At a time when many British film critics regarded Hollywood stars as merely typecast players, Davis was considered to be a true actress. Audiences also rated Davis's talents highly and while cinemagoing was at its height in the mid 1940s her popularity was truly exceptional. She ranked among the top ten stars at the British box-office for six consecutive years (1942 to 1947).[1] This was a feat unmatched by any other actress in that decade, and was significantly better than Davis's record in the USA, where Betty Grable and Greer Garson outshone her in a parallel set of rankings.[2] But what lies behind these accolades and rankings that indicate Davis was so highly regarded in Britain? In order to address that question, this article considers the reception of *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), one of Davis's most popular and critically lauded films. Focusing exclusively on British reactions to the film, it takes account both of critical reviews and of audience responses in the mid 1940s.

Any understanding of Davis's British reputation, however, necessarily begins in October 1936, when she fled from her long-term contract at Warner Bros and arrived in London, announcing that henceforth she would seek work as an actress there. Davis's defiance of Warner Bros was initially likely to have been perceived favourably by many British film fans. The popular film culture of the mid 1930s was dominated by Hollywood films, and articles about Hollywood stars were the mainstay of British fan magazines such as *Picturegoer*

1 Annual polls of 'top money-making stars' were conducted by *Motion Picture Herald* and they are reprinted in the magazine's almanacs. For the 1942 ranking, see *The 1943–44 International Motion Picture Herald Almanac* (1944), p. 784.

2 The US polls were also conducted by the *Motion Picture Herald*. They can be found in the magazine's almanacs, and are reprinted in Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930–1960* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 509–10.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn007

and *Film Weekly*. Yet while the films and stars were popular, the same magazines routinely derided Hollywood as an industry; it was resented both for underestimating the public's taste and for preventing the British film industry from prospering. The studio system was considered crassly commercial; a factory system that made films in the manner that Henry Ford made cars. Davis contributed to such perceptions when she told *Film Weekly* in 1935 that 'it pays to be a "type" in Hollywood', that is, to 'remain more or less the same little woman in every picture'.[3] It was clear she had greater ambitions for herself. Hence, when she arrived in London in 1936 her complaints fell on sympathetic ears, not only because she had chosen Britain as her filmmaking base but also because she had criticized Hollywood for forcing her to make too many films, to play 'unsuitable parts' and to work unreasonably long hours.[4] Her struggle, *Film Weekly* commented, was against 'the Frankenstein monster of Hollywood'.[5] However, the revelation that her weekly salary at Warners reached £600 per week weighed heavily against her in the ensuing court case, and when Davis lost she returned to Warners and gave up the ambition of forging an independent career.

The public's verdict on the case is difficult to ascertain. When the Granada Cinema chain conducted a poll of cinemagoers in 1937, Davis appeared at number thirty on the list of '50 favourite female film stars'.[6] This could be considered a fairly good result. In the previous survey, held in 1934, she had not figured at all.[7] But the 1937 poll also placed Davis at number twelve on the list of most *disliked* female film stars.[8] That Mae West stood at the top of this unfortunate ranking is revealing. A significant portion of the audience disliked women who played assertive, independent, sexually aware characters, and Davis's best-known roles, as a vulgar Cockney waitress in *Of Human Bondage* (John Cromwell, 1934) and as an alcoholic actress in *Dangerous* (Alfred E. Green, 1935), fell within these parameters. Her revolt against Warners may also have suggested a woman who was career-oriented and defiant of authority. Certainly, a publicity campaign initiated on her return to Warners attempted to soften her image. An article in *Film Weekly* cast her as an unusual Hollywood star, not only because her 'objective was to become great as an actress rather than merely to become a great screen star', but also because of her conventional, happy marriage (to the bandleader Harmon Nelson): 'The maid never mentions the name of Miss Davis; neither does the gardener, the cook, nor the neighbours. She is Mrs Nelson at home.'[9] And when *Picturegoer* told her 'life story', as a serial running over three issues, it culminated in her joy at seeing her husband's name rather than her own up in lights on a marquee.[10] At a time when the most popular female stars were Norma Shearer and Myrna Loy – both known for playing genteel, wifely, dignified women – this strategy to improve Davis's image was probably well founded.[11]

3 *Film Weekly*, 29 March 1935, p. 7.

4 *The Times*, 15 October 1936, p. 4.

5 *Film Weekly*, 19 June 1937, pp. 12–13.

6 *Bernstein Questionnaire 1937 Report* (1937), p. 1.

7 *Bernstein Questionnaire 1934 Report* (1934).

8 After Mae West, the other 'disliked' female stars were Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Katherine Hepburn and Jean Harlow. Ibid., p. 6.

9 *Film Weekly*, 19 June 1937, pp. 12–13.

10 The series begins with *Picturegoer*, 23 January 1937, pp. 10–11, and continues in consecutive issues thereafter.

11 Shearer and Loy topped the Bernstein poll of favourite actresses in 1937.

Davis's rising popularity in the early 1940s can be attributed to several factors. Cathy Klaprat has observed that Warner Bros began to experiment with Davis's image in the late 1930s, alternating between casting her in vampish and virtuous roles. As Klaprat argues, this prevented the audience from becoming bored with her films and it also demonstrated her range as an actress.[12] In one year alone, 1939, she played Elizabeth I in *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz), the Empress Carlotta von Habsburg in *Juarez* (William Dieterle), the eponymous heroine of the American Civil War drama *The Old Maid* (Edmund Goulding) and a wealthy heiress dying of cancer in the contemporary *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding). From the British perspective, her refusal to be typecast set her apart from other Hollywood stars. So too did her unusual appearance. When the film critic Ernest Betts referred to her as the 'magnificent pop-eye', he meant it as a compliment. Other Hollywood stars, Betts argued, achieved their fame through beauty and by playing the same 'type' over and over again, but Davis achieved fame through talent and hard work.[13] It is notable, too, that cultural attitudes towards working women had changed by the early 1940s. World War II necessitated a less restrictive range of feminine roles, on screen and in real life. *Now, Voyager* fitted well within this cultural climate, both because its heroine embarks on a journey of self-fulfilment and because the film was regarded as offering a particularly challenging role to cinema's most ambitious actress.

Now, Voyager was first shown in Britain in September 1943.[14] This was a trade screening, held two months before the film was released in London and four months before its general release throughout the country. Trade screenings were held to show the film to the industry's distributors and exhibitors, as well as to film critics, and they were often announced through advertisements in the industry's trade papers. The two-page advertisement that appeared for *Now, Voyager* in *Today's Cinema* was remarkable not only for its size but also because it emphasized Davis over all other factors.[15] The first page of the advertisement is dominated by a drawing of her in character as Charlotte Vale (see figure 1). This was likely to have given readers an indication of the film's genre: Davis's coiffure and evening dress, together with her pensive expression as she holds the telephone, offer some visual clues that *Now, Voyager* is a 'woman's film' or 'romantic drama'. But the headline surrounding the image defines the film primarily in terms of Davis's standing as an actress: 'An entire career points to this one magnificent achievement'. The next page is even more outspoken in this regard (see figure 2). A smaller image of Davis and Paul Henreid is surrounded by large cursive script reading 'Hail Bette Davis'. Interestingly, this advertisement does not appear in the US pressbook for the film.[16] The many posters, advertisements and other displays designed for the US market feature Davis's image and name very prominently, but the taglines promote the film's story rather than her performance ('It happens in the best of families', one US poster declares, 'but you'd never

12 Cathy Klaprat, 'The star as marketing strategy: Bette Davis in another light', in Tino Balio (ed.), *The American Film Industry, Revised Edition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 375.

13 *Sunday Express*, 7 November 1943, p. 6.

14 In the USA, *Now, Voyager* was first shown more than a year earlier, in August 1942.

15 *Today's Cinema*, 7 September 1943, pp. 4–5.

16 The US pressbook for *Now, Voyager* is held by the British Film Institute Library.

Figs 1 and 2

think it could happen to her.') In Britain, however, Warners set expectations of *Now, Voyager* in very different terms. It was Davis's film first and foremost, and a showcase for an actress in her prime.

British film critics by and large agreed with this perspective on the film. In an influential article about British film criticism, John Ellis has argued that between 1942 and 1948, a distinctive school of criticism developed in Britain, at least among a dozen or so critics who reviewed films for newspapers and magazines that were mainly upmarket, London-based publications.[17] As Ellis has observed, these critics extolled the virtues of an emergent style of British cinema: 'realism', 'restraint', 'sincerity', 'understatement' and 'authenticity' were the qualities they most admired in feature films. Equally, they regarded the majority of Hollywood films as 'puerile pulp, synthetic sex and Technicolor goo', made for an American audience whose 'average mental age . . . is round 15 years'.[18] Ellis argues that these critics aimed to influence the tastes of the wider cinemagoing public and, by extension, the future of British filmmaking. However, the 'quality film adventure' did not break completely with the critical values of the past. Many of its leading critics judged films not only on the basis of their 'realism' and 'authenticity', but also on the basis of acting. Here, their critical judgements were informed by values that stemmed from a stage tradition. An actor's talent was apparent in their careful use of gestures, traits and mannerisms to create a character. A good performance was neither transparent nor excessive; in effect, critics wanted to see both the manifestation of the character and the actor's skill in constructing it. This favoured actors who played a wide range of roles, thereby demonstrating their skill in a variety of guises. Davis, of course, was well suited to these critical precepts. She had been known since 1936 for resisting the typecasting and glamour of

17 John Ellis, 'The quality film adventure: British critics and the cinema, 1942–1948', in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema* (London: Continuum, 1996), pp. 66–93. This is a revised version of Ellis's article, 'Art, culture, quality', *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1978), pp. 9–49.

18 Ibid., p. 87.

Hollywood, and when critics spoke of her 'mannerisms' as an actress, it was usually a form of praise.

The importance placed upon acting, and the particular values with which performances were judged, help to explain how and why the 'quality' critics approached *Now, Voyager* so sympathetically. Its story – involving a wealthy Boston family, a heroine who undergoes a remarkable physical transformation and an adulterous relationship on a cruise ship – had little in common with the prevailing notions of realism. Not surprisingly, these critics did express some dissatisfaction with the story, and most thought that it did not warrant the lengthy running time of 117 minutes. Nevertheless, they gave the film serious consideration and found much to praise in Davis's performance. In the *New Statesman*, William Whitebait referred to the 'slightly unconvincing' and 'long drawn-out' story but found the film to be 'well worth seeing for the high level of the acting and some skilfully managed episodes'.[19] The (unnamed) critic for *The Manchester Guardian* complained that 'the treatment of the whole story is diffuse and over-long, and the subject is over-morbid', but nevertheless admired the 'intense and first-rate acting' and especially the 'brilliant Miss Davis'.[20] Similarly, the critic Joan Lester advised readers of *Reynold's News* that 'It is a sentimental film, a little too long, but beautifully acted';[21] and in *The Sunday Times* Dilys Powell observed that 'it is a pity that the precision and control of [Davis's] playing are not paralleled by a greater austerity of form in the telling of the story'.[22] Richard Winnington's review, in the *News Chronicle*, was by far the most enthusiastic of any reviews from the 'quality' school. Winnington, too, found the story to be 'heavy and unreal', but he tempered that judgement with his admiration for the 'delicate restraint of the love-making' and his astonishment that the stars 'look and talk like grown-up lovers'. Despite popular cinema's predilection for romance, these qualities were still 'so rare as to startle'.[23]

The 'quality' critics' views of *Now, Voyager* were not significantly different from those of a wider array of British critics. Most reviewers – including those writing for the fan magazine *Picturegoer* and the tabloid *News of the World* – considered elements of the story to be too familiar. 'Remember the story of the ugly duckling . . . who develops into a swan?', Lionel Collier asked in *Picturegoer*.[24] But this mild disapproval was consistently countered with descriptions of *Now, Voyager* as 'sincere' or 'mature'. It was variously described as 'serious [and] intensely interesting'[25], an 'adult picture',[26] a film 'hardly suitable for children',[27] one centred on 'adult psychology',[28] and as a 'psychological drama'.[29] Bette Davis also drew praise from all critical vantage points. There were two closely related strands of appreciation. Critics admired her technique: her 'little tricks and mannerisms' and her 'immensely expressive and many toned voice', as Paul Tabori commented in the *Daily Mail*, were what made *Now, Voyager* 'Bette at her best'.[30] They also admired her unconventional appearance and her willingness to look unattractive: in the film's earliest scenes, Davis was willing to be

19 *New Statesman*, 6 November 1943 [BFI microfiche].

20 *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1943 [BFI microfiche].

21 *Reynold's News*, 7 November 1943, p. 4.

22 *The Sunday Times*, 17 November 1943 [BFI microfiche].

23 *News Chronicle*, 6 November 1943, p. 2.

24 *Picturegoer*, 25 December 1943, p. 12.

25 *Sunday Dispatch*, 7 November 1943, p. 2.
26 *News of the World*, 7 November 1943, p. 1.
27 *Kine Weekly*, 16 September 1943, p. 26.
28 *The Times*, 4 November 1943, p. 6.
29 *The Cinema*, 15 September 1943, p. 10.
30 *Daily Mail*, 5 November 1943, p. 2.

'grotesque' (*Kine Weekly*), 'lumpish' (*The Cinema*), 'a haunting creature' (*The Times*), and 'plump, bespectacled and shapeless' (*News of the World*). In the *Sunday Express*, Ernest Betts explained that she was the 'most distinguished and popular actress on the American screen' precisely because she was more interested in acting than glamour:

> Bette has the extraordinary faculty of making an unattractive part attractive. . . . She is not a screen beauty, but she gives the impression of beauty. She can look glamorous, yet she does not need glamour to make you look at her. In fact, she is an actress. She conveys the secret emotions and everyday worries of ordinary people.[31]

Thus, even at the height of her stardom, Davis was regarded as working outside of the norms of glamour, and so she appeared to be defying Hollywood, just as she done on her trip to London in 1936.

If critical opinion was surprisingly homogeneous, can the same be said of audience opinion? A Mass-Observation survey of wartime film preferences indicates that middle-class cinemagoers had views strikingly similar to the film critics: respondents commenting on Davis's films discussed her acting skills above all else. Interestingly, men were more likely than women to admire her. The respondents to this Mass-Observation survey, however, cannot be regarded as typical of the majority of cinemagoers, who were more likely to be young, female and either working class or lower middle class.[32] J.P. Mayer's studies of cinema audiences, published as *Sociology of Film* and *British Cinemas and their Audiences*, are more useful in this regard.[33] Mayer drew the majority of his responses from the readers of Britain's leading fan magazine, *Picturegoer*, and its readership closely resembles that of the most frequent cinemagoers. Mayer asked respondents to name their preferences, and also to comment on the influences that films had on their lives, and whether that was manifested in their ambitions, behaviour or dreams. Such questions suited his thesis that the cinema had a deleterious effect on audiences, harming the physical and mental health of children and inhibiting the imagination and individuality of adults. Yet one need not share his basic supposition in order to find the responses fascinating, and highly useful as qualitative rather than quantitative information.

Many of Mayer's respondents expressed their admiration for Davis as an actress. However, where film critics and the respondents to the Mass-Observation questionnaire valued her performances as demonstrations of technique, fans valued them for the feelings that they stirred. A twenty-one-year-old woman, working in a factory, explained very plainly why Davis's films are her 'favourite type':

> I am very emotional especially if a film is sad. Before I realise it tears are springing into my eyes. . . . I feel as if I can place myself in the circumstances of those who are playing the part.[34]

31 *Sunday Express*, 5 November 1943, p. 6.

32 The survey was conducted in November 1943. See Jeffrey Richards and Dorothy Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 220–91.

33 J.P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film: Studies and Documents* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946) and *British Cinemas and their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1948).

34 Mayer, *British Cinemas and their Audiences*, p. 72.

Some were concerned to make it clear that, while they were moved by Davis's films, they remained discriminating viewers. A twenty-one-year-old woman, working as a newspaper reporter, noted her enjoyment of *Now, Voyager*, but drew a distinction between its 'love story' and 'the sloppy cheap sentimental type' usually associated with Hollywood. Others characterized their enjoyment as a guilty secret or an indulgence.[35] A twenty-three-year-old woman, working as a typist, admitted that she 'revelled in *Now, Voyager*' and added, 'I hope my more cynical type of friends will never hear me say this but I love a very sad film with a bit of weeping now and again'.[36] Similarly, a nineteen-year-old woman, working as a clerk, said:

> With true femininity I enjoy a good love-story and if it is the sorrowful type which ostentatiously does not end happily ever after, such as *Now, Voyager*, I can give myself up entirely to the luxury of the moment and indulge my emotions, weeping at the touching scene before me.[37]

Notably, these last three responses all come from office workers, suggesting that lower-middle-class readers were concerned that they could be regarded as having poor taste. Their enjoyment is therefore discussed defensively (in the first instance) or as a fleeting indulgence (in the second and third instances).

The emotional response to Davis's films was not limited to women. A nineteen-year-old male student, whose father worked in a factory, commented on the intense feelings that *Now, Voyager* summoned in him, and particularly the scenes prior to Charlotte's transformation. Seeing a Hollywood star appear unattractive was unsettling for him:

> Bette Davis makes me feel strangely uncomfortable sometimes when watching her. Especially did I feel this in *Now, Voyager* – particularly at the beginning when she was so awkward with herself. But then after the change, I felt alright again. Perhaps Miss Davis has more 'hold' over me than any other screen performer.[38]

A twenty-one-year-old clerk regarded Davis's performance in *Now, Voyager* 'as one of the most enthralling episodes in my movie experience'. The 'huge emotional benefit' that he got from this 'great acting' made him want to study drama himself.[39] A twenty-four-year-old farmer was so moved by the romance in *Now, Voyager* that he hoped he would one day find for himself the form of 'true, lasting and perfect love' portrayed by Davis and Henreid.[40] In these responses, the story dismissed by so many critics as escapist or unreal was valued as an intense emotional experience and, in the latter two responses at least, one which gave rise to personal aspirations.

For many respondents, Davis served as a role model. In a wider study of postwar, female British film fans, Jackie Stacey has argued that fans' emulation of stars took different forms.[41] One was 'copying appearances', such as hairstyles, makeup and fashions. This was actively

35 Ibid., pp. 108–12.

36 Ibid., pp. 209–10.

37 Ibid., pp. 69–71.

38 Ibid., pp. 191–4.

39 Ibid., pp. 112–3.

40 Mayer, *Sociology of Film*, p. 208.

41 Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 162–8.

encouraged by British fan magazines, which informed readers how they could manage to recreate Hollywood glamour despite the rationing and austerity of the 1940s.[42] Another form of emulation was 'imitating behaviour', which involved mimicry or assuming the personality of the star. Both forms were directly relevant to Mayer's thesis, and he asked questions such as 'what have you imitated from films in mannerisms [and] dress?'[43] Not surprisingly, then, there are frequent comments on this topic. While many women state that they follow Hollywood styles and try to recreate them for themselves, few comments relate this to specific stars. By contrast, 'imitating behaviour' is discussed much more specifically, and Davis is a clear favourite. One type of imitation involved memorizing scenes from Davis's films. An eighteen-year-old woman who worked as a cashier indicated that she wrote down the dialogue from *Dark Victory*, *Now, Voyager* and *Watch on the Rhine* (Herman Shumlin, 1943), so that 'if I wish to relive the scenes in any of the films, all I have to do is read over my writing'. This was a part of a particularly strong admiration for the star; the respondent states that 'the greatest wish of my life is to meet Bette Davis'.[44] Another 'imitator' also relates strong feelings. This twenty-two-year-old man, working as a clerk, commented that he saw each of Davis's films four or five times while they played at his local cinema, and that 'I've often caught myself' using her 'clipped phrases and highly dramatic movements' in conversation.[45]

For others, imitating the distinctive Davis style was a means of gaining social status or confidence. A sixteen-year-old girl, working as a library assistant, commented that she often imitated the 'haughty laughter of Bette Davis' because she 'hate[s] girls who giggle'.[46] Another woman, a twenty-year-old civil servant, admitted to drawing on Davis's expressions and mannerisms when she needed 'quick wit' during 'office chatter'.[47] A twenty-three-year-old factory worker revealed that when she faced a difficult decision, she thought of her two favourite stars and asked herself, 'what would Bette Davis or Greer Garson do in such a situation?'[48] For Mayer, statements such as these were evidence that films had the effect of 'levelling down' individuality. 'Count the Bette Davises, the Greer Garsons or David Nivens you may meet every day when you travel to your office!' he exclaimed with some dismay, but his concern comes across as snobbery rather than genuine social observation.[49] More recently, the playwright Alan Bennett has offered a much more incisive opinion of why Davis was so frequently imitated in the 1940s. In his memoirs, *Untold Stories*, Bennett recalled that his two 'aunties', Kathleen and Myra, lived in their hometown of Leeds, worked at routine jobs as shop assistants, and remained unmarried well into middle age. But they liked to think of themselves as 'women of the world' and took Bette Davis as their model of the modern, sophisticated woman, who could drink, smoke, banter and hold her own in social situations:

42 See, for example, the beauty and fashion articles that appeared regularly in *Picture Show* in this period, such as 'Dressing at the half-coupon rate', *Picture Show*, 29 January 1944, p. 14.

43 Mayer, *British Cinemas and their Audiences*, p. 14.

44 Mayer, *Sociology of Film*, p. 220.

45 Mayer, *British Cinemas and their Audiences*, pp. 104–5.

46 Ibid., p. 123.

47 Ibid., pp. 91–2.

48 Mayer, *Sociology of Film*, p. 262.

49 Ibid., p. 265.

> The supreme exponent of brittle sophistication was Bette Davis, and for my aunties in particular she was someone to emulate. With her clipped tones, raised eyebrow and mocking smile Bette was a standard bearer for shop assistants everywhere and in the 1940s you could find her presiding over the counters of the smarter shops.[50]

50 Alan Bennett, *Untold Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 166.

Their favourite film was *Now, Voyager*, and looking back decades later Bennett understood the relevance that it had for them in the mid 1940s, as Myra joined the WAAFs (and embarked for India on a cruise ship) and Kathleen joined the ambulance service. For a generation of women who faced unforeseen opportunities and upheavals, Davis offered a road map through the social changes, or at least a model of confident, independent femininity.

Over subsequent decades, *Now, Voyager* developed a reputation not only as one of Davis's finest films, but also as a Hollywood classic. By the time it was shown on British television in 2007 – its tenth screening on the BBC since 1973 – it was heralded in the press as 'one of the all-time great weepies'[51] and as 'the epitome of what used to be called the woman's picture'.[52] These epithets were meant as high praise for a familiar, favourite film, but there is also a sense in which familiarity had narrowed the film's reputation. In the 1940s, *Now, Voyager* had not been so easily labelled as a 'weepie' or a 'woman's film'. For the majority of critics, the quality of Davis's acting lifted the film above any routine generic classification. Audiences were more divided, with some discussing the acting and others their emotional response to it, but it was class rather than gender differences that separated these reactions. Furthermore, *Now, Voyager* was regarded as an exceptional rather than a definitive Hollywood film. Davis's performance was integral to its high standing, but it is also clear that the film's story had a striking relevance for wartime British audiences. Charlotte Vale's transformation may have been set thousands of miles away, but in cinemas up and down Britain her story resonated with audiences who faced, or perhaps only wished that they faced, a similar journey of self-realization and fulfilment.

51 *Radio Times*, 31 March 2007, p. 69.

52 *The Guardian*, The Guide, 31 March 2007, p. 53.

Don't let's ask for the moon – we have a star! Bette Davis as gay icon

ED SIKOV

On June 13, 1934, the infamous 'General Principles' of the Production Code acquired the sharp teeth of enforceability when Hollywood's studios agreed to submit all scripts to a central censoring agency, the Production Code Administration, for approval. 'No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin. Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented. . .'[1] But several silver linings immediately emerged around the darkening clouds of compulsory inhibitions, particularly sexual restrictions. For one thing, screenwriters and directors quickly realized that if they removed the sex from sexual combat they would still be left with the combat, and the subgenre of screwball comedy was born: bickering, bantering couples became a mainstay of US comedy for at least the next two decades.[2] On another front, though in a somewhat less chronologically definitive way, an increased level of sexual repression onscreen only served to encourage a particular segment of the mass audience to react in a radical way in terms of identification: certain men crossed genders and adopted a new kind of female star as their own. I am referring to gay men's appropriation of Bette Davis as a screen icon *par excellence*.[3]

Issues of secrecy and concealment, exposure and revelation lie at the heart of gay men's experience in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, any hopeful notions of a 'post-gay' world notwithstanding. As queer theory and gay cultural history jointly serve to prove, what others know of one's sexual identity – the possibility of sharing such an

1 URL: http://www.artsreformation.com/a001/hays-code.html [accessed 26 November 2007].

2 It is not coincidental that the first three screwball comedies – *Twentieth Century* (Howard Hawks), *The Thin Man* (W.S.Van Dyke) and the blockbuster *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra) – were all released in 1934, and that romantic comedies changed substantially once the Production Code became increasingly irrelevant in the 1950s.

3 Four actresses served as gay men's greatest icons from the 1930s through the 1950s, the period of the Production Code's authority: Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland and Marilyn Monroe. It is a personal choice on my part, I recognize, but I find Davis to be not only the best actress of the four but also the most continually intriguing in terms of her acting style.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn008

intimate secret and the limiting of access to that knowledge – often hinges on the idea of performance. Hence gay men *act* as a matter of daily life; performances of masculinity, we know all too well, scarcely come naturally. As a result, perhaps, gay men tend not only to appreciate but to revel in the art of acting – performance for the sake not of transparency but of blatancy. In this patently artificial light, it makes a great deal of sense that, from the mid 1930s onwards, gay men have chosen Bette Davis to be a central focus of our cinematic identification. We made her our star.

Central not only to Davis's iconography but also to gay men's iconolatry of her is the fact that she is the Hollywood star who most wanted audiences to notice her acting as acting. Transparent naturalism was never her goal; in fact, she strove for precisely the opposite effect. Always a Yankee, Davis harboured a work ethic as stringent and unforgiving as the New England winters of her childhood. Both onscreen and off, she compelled audiences to admire her for working hard. She wanted us to see her acting; she demanded that audiences see her performances as being difficult to achieve – the result of perceptible effort on her part. Davis's style was often flamboyant, though it is crucial to note that her sense of restraint remains under-appreciated. Davis's face in repose is as expressive as her broadest gestures and vocal deliveries. Still, it is, I think, Davis's flamboyance towards which gay men have gravitated since the mid 1930s – the overt theatricality that nevertheless expresses authentic (if at times histrionic) experience.

A common starting point for discussions of what constitutes a gay sensibility is the notion of excess, although the concept remains problematic precisely because there can be no firm and final judgment as to what constitutes normativity. What is appropriate for a businessman in a corporate meeting is meagre and deficient for a drag queen at full throttle, and since the individual in question may well be one and the same, to privilege the former by granting his behaviour the status of normativity is to deny the emotional reality, let alone the political and social equality, of the latter. Nevertheless, the concept of excess remains useful to describe performance style because it expresses, in however flawed a manner, the lack of transparency and naturalism in which Bette Davis traded. Is it possible that what is normative is simply that which goes unnoticed?

Davis herself was quite aware of the specific aesthetic problem her persona raises. 'While I'm small, I've always been too much', she once told the critic Bruce Williamson.

> For me, when anything's utterly naturalistic, so untheatrical, no make-up – well, it's a bore. . . . I think acting should be larger than life. The writing, the scripts should be larger than life. It should all be larger than life. You still run into directors today who tell you [to] 'do less in a close-up than you do in a long shot. Don't, for God's sake, give any suggestion that you're acting. Just be natural.' No, no, no, no, no, no![4]

4 Bruce Williamson, '*Playboy* interview: Bette Davis', *Playboy* (July 1982), pp. 67–94.

Her reaction to normative, unnoticed naturalism could not have been more emphatically negative.

Twentieth-century gay men were particularly receptive to Davis's theatrical, attention-calling style because we lived lives in which performance was paramount – both the often-failed performance of heterosexuality in public and its converse, the gleeful performance of camp within the increasingly large circles of the gay community as it expanded in the second half of the century. Even today the language of performance persists in certain gay men's personals ads, though the particular term in question – 'straight-acting' – subverts itself by revealing that the putatively desirable character trait is actually the result of artifice, the studied craft of a skilled performer whose essential nature remains distinct from the put-on act.

In any case, the ability of an excessive, to-be-noticed performance to reveal multiple layers simultaneously – the actress playing a character, with the audience not merely aware of the difference but actively relishing it – formed the basis of Bette Davis's stardom, which began in earnest in 1934. Temporarily freed from the factory-like Warner Bros, which held Davis under long-term contract and kept her confined to playing similar and relatively conventional characters (the gangster's moll in *20,000 Years in Sing-Sing* [Michael Curtiz, 1932], the wisecracker in *Parachute Jumper* [Alfred E. Green, 1933], the irresponsible young heiresses in both *The Working Man* [John G. Adolfi, 1933] and *Fog Over Frisco* [William Dieterle, 1934], the urbane graphic designers in both *So Big* [William A. Wellman, 1932] and *Fashions of 1934* [William Dieterle, 1934]), Davis was loaned to RKO for John Cromwell's ambitious 1934 adaptation of W. Somerset Maugham's melodramatic novel *Of Human Bondage*. Here Davis was set free: Cromwell and RKO finally gave her the chance to play a downright unpleasant and disreputable character in a performance that demanded to be perceived as such. Not only did she play Mildred Rogers as a cheap, sleazy, ruinous woman of the sort movie stars were supposed not to want to play, but she played the role full tilt with an eye towards making her audience despise her character while admiring her for having the guts to play her with such brutal honesty. For Davis, art was labour, and not only did she strive for us to appreciate her work as work, she also went out of her way to appear as repulsive onscreen as possible, in part to be true to the script, in part to distinguish herself from her more glamour-conscious peers. Near the end of the film, when Cromwell presents Mildred dying (of syphilis, barely disguised as consumption), Davis looks supremely, divinely ghastly, her cheeks sunken, her eyes weak, her mouth slack, her body propped hideously against a drab wall. It's a shocking moment, as Davis knew it would be.

To distinguish herself from her character – to reveal herself as the labouring creator of a distinct character who is unlike herself – Davis employs several strategies. First, her Cockney accent is layered and impure, a low-class twang unsuccessfully masked by pretension and

delivered by a decidedly American woman. As Martin Shingler has observed, 'It is not that her Cockney accent is a poor imitation of the real thing, but that the noticeable care and attention going into it alerts us to the fact that it is a contrivance. . . . It is not Mildred's comments that we judge but the success or otherwise of Davis's performance.'[5] Moreover, beyond the skilful vocal inflection that calls attention to itself as a device, Davis's performance is historic because it is in *Of Human Bondage* that she (to borrow the novelist Blanche McCrary Boyd's marvellous phrase) begins to speak in italics, in this case highly imitable iambs. Throughout the film, Mildred replies to each of Philip's (Leslie Howard) invitations with '*I* don't *mind*', a line Davis reads with increasingly irritating condescension, a vocal recognition of what we are asked to see as Mildred's pathetic attempt to rise above her station. As Shingler suggests, it is an accent perceptible as an actress's loose impression of Cockney, not a mimic's accurate impersonation. And by adding the italicized delivery, the actress Bette Davis demands to be recognized specifically as the actress Bette Davis, the stresses her vocal signature writ large and loud.

5 Martin Shingler, 'Bette Davis: malevolence in motion', in Alan Lovell and Peter Kramer (eds), *Screen Acting* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 52.

Since overt expressions of homosexuality were explicitly forbidden by the Production Code, Hollywood had to inscribe gayness delicately onscreen, if it could inscribe it at all. Davis's *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939) is a case in point. Davis learned of the property (a Broadway play that ran for only fifty-one performances in late 1934) early in 1938, and in characteristic fashion she made a nuisance of herself over it with Warners' front office.[6] She cajoled and pleaded to no avail until, finally, one Warners producer expressed interest – David Lewis, an associate producer of *The Sisters* (which Davis had recently filmed) and the lover of James Whale. Together, they approached the bisexual Goulding, and the threesome of Davis, Goulding and Lewis convinced Jack Warner to buy the rights to *Dark Victory* from David O. Selznick for $50,000, though, notoriously, Warner himself could not understand why anybody would 'want to see a picture about a girl who dies'.[7]

6 That she was headstrong might go without saying, but it is worth stressing that she appealed not only to female audiences as an independent woman who could be belligerent when necessary but also to gay men who related to her pent-up energy and barely suppressed rage.

7 Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life: an Autobiography* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), p. 183.

It is telling that Bette Davis received the most sympathetic responses to *Dark Victory* from Lewis and Goulding, a gay man and a bisexual, rather than from Warner or Hal Wallis, Davis's longtime producer. If there is such a thing as a gay sensibility – however imprecise and indefinable it may be – *Dark Victory* embodies it, at least in part. The writer Jeff Weinstein once offered a definition that stands the test of time: when asked whether there was such a thing as a gay sensibility and whether it had any influence on mainstream culture, Weinstein answered that, no, there is no such thing as a gay sensibility, and yes, it has had an enormous influence on popular culture. In other words, the gay sensibility is actually not only elusive but multiplicitous – a subculturally dependent assemblage of tastes and styles that changes

over time and exerts various forms and degrees of influence on the mass culture from which it springs.

Bette Davis as gay icon. *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939)

Davis's character in *Dark Victory*, Judith Traherne, is already gay in the archaic sense of the word: she is flippant, merry, a bit boozy. She is a good-time gal with unlimited wealth and a fabulous wardrobe, and any gay man worth his salt – any gay man *d'un certain âge*, that is – would happily imagine himself in her pumps. But *Dark Victory*'s unabashedly amplified, high-stakes melodrama, especially as performed by the look-at-me-acting Bette Davis, elevates it into the pantheon of gay iconography – the impassioned and exceedingly imitable realm of the drama queen. It is not just that the queen of both fact and fiction reigns melodramatically, though in the case of *Dark Victory*, of course, she is awarded a brain tumour and a splendid, heartrending death at the end. More essentially, it is the suppressed energy of concealment and its imminent breakdown that provide the gay regent with much of her dramatic authority.

As I noted earlier, the question of who knows what about one lies at the heart of gay men's experience; Eve Sedgwick memorably called it 'the epistemology of the closet'.[8] But queer theory is also queer practice. As the openly gay playwright, actor and actress Charles Busch notes of Bette Davis, who clearly influenced his own theatrical style: 'She's wonderful at playing someone with a secret – like the scenes in *Dark Victory* where

8 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

she knows she's dying, and she's being a horrible bitch to everybody'.[9] One moment in the film crystallizes the double-edged theme of failed secrecy and pulse-racing exposure. The bizarrely seductive line 'I'd love to kiss ya but I just washed my hair' from *Cabin in the Cotton* (Michael Curtiz, 1932) may have been Davis's first camp-worthy bit of dialogue, but her delivery of Judith Traherne's grandest line is precisely that of the flamboyant gay queen of the dramatic arts ripping the veil off a secret and exposing it to the light. Having discovered the truth about her own mortal illness, the drunken but no less articulate Judith lets her doctor and best friend in on the secret they have attempted to keep from her by snatching a menu out of a visibly startled waiter's hands and, nostrils flaring, declaring: 'I think I'll have a large order of prognosis negative!'

There is nothing subtle about Davis's delivery of the line. The final two words are not merely stressed; she all but sings them in sour jubilation, a triumph rendered exceptionally perverse by the fact that she is pronouncing her own death sentence. The irony is thick, visceral and delightfully entertaining. Bette Davis is being, in a word, queeny. From similar moments of subterfuge and its glorious destruction, failed concealment and can't-help-it revelation, twentieth-century gay men forged a subculture.

It is worth noting in this context that before we were 'out' we were 'in': predating the expression 'coming out' was the term 'in the life'. 'Out' suggests exposure; 'in' suitably suggests a valuable membership in a secret society, knowledge of which was withheld from the general population.

One of Davis's greatest melodramas, *Now, Voyager* (1942), reads just as clearly as a gay man's coming out story as the tale of a woman's emergence from repression and mental illness to independence and maturity. Its director Irving Rapper, who had just directed *The Gay Sisters* (1942), was one himself. Like Goulding, Rapper appreciated, with whatever degree of overt consciousness, that so-called women's pictures were also appealing to a certain strain of men. *Now, Voyager* suggests a gay man's fraught quest for self-acceptance after a drastically negative adolescence as much as it explicitly tells of an independent, free-thinking woman's emergence from a state of self-loathing and sexual inhibition, imposed by a mother who never wanted her to begin with. Bette Davis is quite rightfully his embodiment as well as hers.

It is of no small consequence that both *Dark Victory* and *Now, Voyager* feature proto-gay men as secondary characters. In *Dark Victory* it is Judith's sodden friend Alec, played more or less asexually by Ronald Reagan, who later complained that Goulding had directed him to play the character (as euphemistically phrased by Reagan) as 'a fellow that could sit down in the room while the gals were changing clothes and they wouldn't mind. And I didn't really see it that way.' Didn't, couldn't, no

9 Charles Busch, Interview with Ed Sikov, 26 May 2004.

matter. Goulding's biographer, Matthew Kennedy, goes so far as to call Reagan's objection a kind of homosexual panic: 'His character is watery and forgettable, and Reagan's refusal to take chances makes him appear insecure both as an actor and as a man'.[10]

In *Now, Voyager*, it is the charming, ever-fluttering Franklin Pangborn who scurries onto the scene just in time to introduce the still-shaky Charlotte (Davis) to the suave Jerry Durrance (Paul Henreid), with whom she falls in love. Like Eric Blore's many onscreen performances,[11] Pangborn's appearance here is a wink at a knowing gay audience. He is the ship's busy-bee social director, as stereotypically gay a job as a hairdresser or florist. 'Ah, Miss Beauchamps! Here you are! We've been waiting for you!', Pangborn squeals. (Charlotte is traveling under an assumed name.) Then, in a flurry: 'Miss Beauchamps! Miss Beauchamps? Allow me to introduce Mr Durrance. . . . You're traveling alone, and he's traveling alone, and, and so, that's splendid!' Pangborn pops up at the end of the cruise as well. As Charlotte's sister-in-law and niece stand by at the pier, flabbergasted by Charlotte's transformation from dowdy spinster to chic socialite, a couple starts to bid Charlotte goodbye, but Pangborn rushes into the shot and stops them: 'Don't anybody say goodbye! Not anybody! Just "au revoir!"' His rapid-fire line delivery is breathless and funny, like a machine gun shooting violets: 'It is a sad time, isn't it, but I want to tell you one thing – there was no lady on this cruise that was as popular as you were. Au revoir!'

Pangborn's presence does not in itself make *Now, Voyager* a gay coming out story; Charlotte's transformation from hung-up ugly duckling to glamorous, sexually active woman of the world achieves the effect successfully without Pangborn's intervention. But given the degree to which representations of homosexuality were suppressed under the Production Code, Pangborn's appearance here is almost trumpet-like in its announcement of *Now, Voyager*'s chief sociosexual subtext.

Eve Sedgwick's description of the closet's epistemology remains brilliantly useful, but it tells only half the story: gay men know the ontology of theatre equally well – the being of acting, the essential reality that only stylization can fully reveal. Bette Davis remains its prime exemplar in the cinema, with fussy, prissy, witty character actors like Pangborn and Blore serving as grace notes. In *Now, Voyager*, as elsewhere, Davis's theatricality hits at something existentially honest; her mannerisms express core emotional truths. Charles Busch describes it in the practical terms of a working performer and playwright:

> What I find interesting about her is that while she's the most stylized of all those Hollywood actresses, the most mannered, she's also to me the most psychologically acute. You see it in *Now, Voyager* in the scene on the boat when she starts to cry, and she's playing it in a very romantic style. Henreid says, 'My darling – you are crying', and she says, 'These are only tears of gratitude – an old maid's gratitude for

10 Matthew Kennedy, *Edmund Goulding's Dark Victory* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 179–80

11 For instance, Blore played Leslie Howard's manservant in Davis's *It's Love I'm After* (Archie Mayo, 1937), spied by a titillated Bonita Granville through the keyhole declaring his love to Howard – in fact they are acting out a theatrical scene.

the crumbs offered'. It's very movie-ish, but the way she turns her head inward, away from the camera, is very real.[12]

12 Busch, Interview with Ed Sikov.

In the instance Busch so perceptively describes and appreciates, Davis uses her melodramatic mannerisms and breathy, teary vocal delivery as well as her seemingly spontaneous nuzzling into Henreid's chest to express the undeniable legitimacy of self-pity. It is not a pretty emotion, but Davis somehow makes it so. Through Davis's elevating, sublimating stylization, Charlotte Vale's secret shame becomes beautiful. For gay men, particularly those who lived under the repressive social and legal conditions of much of the twentieth century, it must have been especially vivifying to see someone feel sorry for herself with such exquisite style and grace.

'Butcha are, Blanche! Ya are in that chair!' If there is a single Bette Davis line that captures, in both its content and delivery, the appeal Davis continues to hold for gay men, that line is Baby Jane Hudson's immortal response to her sister's failed attempt at conscious wish-fulfillment, the appealing but impossible 'if only' that would allow the paraplegic Blanche to walk again. Robert Aldrich's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* is forty-six years old, and yet gay men still regularly respond to a wide variety of situations involving someone else's inability to face reality not only by delivering the line in direct imitation of Bette Davis but by employing an even more common shorthand: when a gay man calls another gay man 'Blanche', he means to slap the man back to whatever cold, hard fact he is attempting to deny at that moment.

The line as written is amusing, but it is Davis's (for lack of a better word) excessive delivery that elevates it, and Davis herself, to an iconic level. Aldrich confines the two women in a frame-within-a-frame formed by the wrought iron bars of Blanche's window as Blanche (Joan Crawford) plaintively accuses: 'You wouldn't be able to do these awful things to me if I weren't still in this chair'.[13] Davis keeps her eyes downcast and her mouth in a determined frown to suggest that Jane is guiltily acknowledging her sister's point, believing as she does that it is she who caused the car accident that left Blanche paralyzed. But then cold reality dawns even on the demented Jane, a realization Davis expresses by rolling her eyes broadly – twice – in triumph, whirling around (leading with a expansive sweep of the shoulder) and announcing the cruelly simple truth of the matter: 'Butcha are, Blanche! Ya are in that chair!' Aldrich cuts on the action of Jane's turn to an imbalanced reverse-shot of Jane standing menacingly over Blanche, who is now seen from the back, and Jane emphasizes her observation by stretching her arm limply towards the vehicle in question, as though the obviousness and finality of Blanche's paralysis was such that Jane need not put any further effort into pointing it out.

13 Jane has, by this point in the film, served Blanche her lunch on a lidded silver tray: it is Blanche's parakeet, with a dollop of mayonnaise to garnish.

As loath as some contemporary gay men may be to acknowledge it, the blunt underlying truth to which the expression 'Butcha are, Blanche' inevitably refers in gay men's culture is, of course, homosexuality itself. In this locution, drawn expressly from the career of Bette Davis, the failure of concealment is cause for celebration through comedy. If only my irrepressibly fluttering hands didn't give me away. If only I didn't giggle at the very mention of the name Joan Crawford. If only I wasn't such a swish. Butcha are, Blanche. Ya are gay. It's a joyous proclamation of fact, and Bette Davis makes it so.

The philosopher Stanley Cavell, referring to melodramas of female abnegation, and *Now, Voyager* in particular, astutely asks: 'Is it that the women in them are sacrificing themselves to the sad necessities of a world they are forced to accept? Or isn't it rather that the women are claiming the right to judge a world as second-rate that enforces this sacrifice; to refuse, transcend, its proposal of second-rate sadness?'[14] In light of Cavell's observations, it is little wonder that Bette Davis became an icon for several generations of gay men, who learned through bitter experience the severe limitations that mainstream culture imposes on rebellious selves, the social and sexual restrictions that make life so much drearier than it might otherwise be. But gay men also learned that they could, through wit and style and camp, rise above this drab and oppressive and thoroughly second-rate world and, inside at least, be the fabulous men we were meant to be. Bette Davis helped make this transcendence possible. We knew we couldn't shoot for the moon, but we didn't have to. We had a star.

14 Stanley Cavell, 'Ugly duckling, funny butterfly: Bette Davis and *Now, Voyager*', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1990), pp. 226–7

Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006, 310 pp.

WILLIAM BODDY

review

Barbara Klinger's *Beyond the Multiplex* is an ambitious and largely successful attempt to apply the methods and insights of film and cultural studies to the study of the contemporary home as an exhibition site for Hollywood cinema in the USA. After providing a quick sketch of the history of the private home as an arena for non-theatrical film distribution (extending back to the silent film era), radio adaptations of studio feature films and television broadcasts of Hollywood features, Klinger devotes most of her book to the examination of the presence of Hollywood films in the home over the past two decades. These years witnessed the proliferation of cable movie channels, the diffusion of the VCR, DVD player and home theatre system (spurring the practices of time shifting, repeated viewing and film collecting), and the very recent emergence of internet-based film distribution services. The thorough and still-ongoing changes affecting the role of the home in the economic practices and cultural position of Hollywood are indeed striking, and Klinger's book provides a useful survey of this rapidly shifting landscape. In this regard, *Beyond the Multiplex* is but one sign of the recent interest among film scholars in exploring the neglected history of non-theatrical exhibition, a topic likely to have increasing relevance in an era of proliferating screens, in both public and private spaces.

Klinger's book is largely taken up with five case studies, each involving a single technological feature or audience practice, including: the marketing of home theatre systems; the use of the VCR and DVD player to support a technologically-inflected culture of film collecting and connoisseurship; the early history of American Movie Classics (AMC), then a commercial-free cable channel devoted to classical

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn009

Hollywood filmmaking; the significance of repeated domestic viewing of feature films by young adults; and the internet distribution of short films and user-made parodies of mainstream Hollywood films. While methodologically varied and historically distinct, the five case studies are linked by Klinger's consistent concern with the broader questions of gender, ideology and taste cultures. *Beyond the Multiplex* demonstrates that close study of these discrete historical moments can offer genuine insights into a number of perennial debates within film and cultural studies, including the nature of cinephilia, canon formation, film's role in popular memory and the construction of personal identity, fan culture, the 'chick flick' genre, star theory, the pleasures of repeated viewing, the psychology of collecting and the gender context of technological change. Klinger situates each case study within a broad range of theoretical and critical literature, from Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Pierre Bourdieu to a number of contemporary scholars in cultural studies, film studies and social history. The book's scholarship is thoughtful, the citations rich and wide-ranging, and the connections across fields often rewarding. Its attention to trade press reporting, popular film reviewing, and to advertising and promotional discourses is also productive, especially in the first chapter, 'The new media aristocrats: home theatre and the film experience', where the discussion of the sometimes over-the-top, class-based culinary rhetoric of home theatre promotion is highly entertaining and the use of illustrations from advertising images especially enlightening.

Klinger's mix of industry history, audience study and occasional textual analysis is used to challenge the tendency of some contemporary research to overestimate the historical novelty and technological autonomy of new media in the home. Instead, Klinger embeds new video technologies into existing industry practices, popular memory, gender roles and audience tactics; the result, if occasionally scolding in tone, is a salutary reminder of what is *not* new in new media. The ways in which recent moving-image recording and display technologies in the home have contested traditional definitions of the film text, oppositions between public and private exhibition sites, and notions of viewer agency are examined in a variety of contexts, from the heights of Hollywood elites – including recent controversies over the use of DVD 'screeners' for Academy Award voting – to the everyday battles over the remote control in the living room. *Beyond the Multiplex* maintains a consistent populist and contrarian tone, from challenging the distinct cultural valuations privileging repeated viewing of 'difficult' modernist films by film connoisseurs over similar repeated viewing of 'chick flicks' by young women, to the discussion of teen versus academic taste canons in cinema. The ways in which Klinger invokes social and political history in the specific case studies is often highly effective, as when she relates early efforts to forge a brand identity for the young AMC cable network to the climate of economic and political insecurity in the USA during the early 1990s. Thus, her analysis of the strategic enlargement of the notion

of 'classic' Hollywood films, and the association of the film preservationist movement's recovery of Hollywood's film heritage with the geopolitical defence of US hegemony in the face of perceived Japanese economic expansionism, illuminates the general relationship of film culture to discourses of popular memory and nationalism. Similarly, her discussion of the specific forms of film criticism found in the pages of home theatre hobbyist magazines, inflected by their pervasive 'hardware aesthetic', and in the *American Movie Classics Magazine*, informed by a self-interested promotion of film preservation, is suggestive. I nevertheless wish she had said more about the relationship of these novel contexts and criteria of film criticism to their mainstream counterparts.

Klinger's situating of recent media technologies in the longer social narratives of domesticity and gender brings some fundamental questions of contemporary media studies to the fore, including the perennial tension between the notion of the autonomous (private) home – Superman's fortress of solitude, quoted at the beginning of the book – which is, at the same time, increasingly hardwired into the public world of media and consumption. Equally pertinent are the debates over whether domestic media technologies provide increased viewer freedom and control over media texts or merely represent a further colonization of the home by multinational media corporations. The prospect of a future for cinephilia without film, or indeed without public cinemas, might also spur cinema scholars to reconsider productively the ontological and historical specificities of their object of study. The book's conclusion underscores the ubiquitous striving for cultural capital and social prestige across the case studies – from purchasing elaborate home theatre systems to memorizing cult film dialogue – efforts typically couched in a rhetoric of mastery and distinction. Klinger also argues that her disparate case studies suggest continual efforts to support the cultural centrality of the studio blockbuster, from the aesthetics of home theatre sound and image to web film parodies produced as industry calling-cards by wannabe Hollywood directors. Klinger's cultural pessimism is tempered both by her concluding acknowledgement that everyday viewing provides opportunities for critique *and* affirmation of social authority and by her endorsement of Charlotte Brunsdon's caution against ascribing essential qualities to any particular media technology or application.

By the nature of its project, *Beyond the Multiplex* takes aim at a quickly-moving target of technological change, and Klinger is careful to foreswear the role of media industry prognosticator – for which there is no shortage of candidates. Instead of an exhaustive and continuous history of the past two decades of domestic media devices, Klinger offers a series of discrete snapshots of emerging technologies, cable services and audience practices at 'threshold periods' of technological change and institutional uncertainty. It is striking to note how much has continued to change since Klinger's research, not just incrementally, as seen in the continued diffusion of home theatre and high-definition television

receivers, but in the growth of new services and devices such as YouTube and video iPods. In this regard, the concluding chapter on the emerging uses of the internet for the distribution of short films and parodies of Hollywood blockbusters suffers the most from ongoing changes in the digital landscape. While the twin foci of the chapter – the rise of Atom Films as distributor of made-for-the-web short films and the politics of the web-film parody – are justified and satisfying on their own terms, the reader is left with a hunger for a wider scrutiny of the rapidly expanding applications of the internet which might speak to the book's themes of domestic technologies, the efforts to maintain Hollywood's cultural hegemony, and viewer agency. For example, the trade press is currently fiercely debating the future consumer appeal of the media text as a physical artefact, in the form of a CD or DVD, versus its virtual ownership in the form of a music or video download, streaming video, subscription or video-on-demand. The outcomes of such debates will have obvious implications, for instance, for the culture of movie collecting that Klinger analyzes in her second chapter. In a similar vein, the widespread diffusion of DVD players and home theatre systems raises the question of the relationship Klinger explores between the specific cultures of the technophilic early adopters and the more diffuse mass audience which has succeeded them. While the specific objects in Klinger's case studies have often shifted identity and function (indeed, she notes the transformation of AMC from an advertising-free network celebrating classical Hollywood cinema to a more diffuse advertising-supported movie channel during the course of her research), her theoretically informed and methodologically reflective historical enquiry has not only produced insights into our recent technological past but may also help provide a model for future researchers.

Amelie Hastie, *Cupboards of Curiosity: Women, Recollection and Film History*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007, 242 pp.

KRISTIAN MOEN

In this illuminating and original study, Amelie Hastie examines the writing of film history. *Cupboards of Curiosity* focuses on how Colleen Moore, Louise Brooks and Alice Guy-Blaché produced their own histories of early cinema, and also on their place in those histories, through different forms of recollection. Hastie builds a study of historiography around these engaging case studies, exploring the various traces that have been left and the different methods that have been used to reconstruct the past. Rather than offering a revised historical narrative, the book uncovers disparate voices and different approaches that have investigated and reconstructed cinema history. What emerges is a wider perspective on the ways in which the women who helped to shape the history of cinema also participated in the writing and interpretation of that history. Throughout the book, Hastie explores a range of different historical materials authored by women, including familiar (but often under-examined) examples, such as interviews and autobiographies. But a more diverse interpretation of writing and telling history is examined, including scrapbooks, collections, doll's houses, memoirs, photographs, marginal notes, critical writings, advice columns, 'how-to' books and cookbooks. Hastie is concerned not only with unearthing these often marginalized elements of film culture, she also uses them as a starting point from which to elaborate on theoretical and social concerns around the writing of history. By attending to this diverse set of historical 'writings', Hastie demonstrates the value of exploring 'expanded boundaries of film history and film culture' (p. 13).

The book is divided into four chapters, each examining a mode of writing film history: 'The collector', 'The historian', 'The critic' and

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn010

'The expert'. The first chapter's discussion of collecting as a way of reconstructing history focuses on the striking example of the film star Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle, a doll's house in which the milieu of 1920s Hollywood and the long shadow of consumer culture are fantastically staged. An '8′7″ × 8′2″ × 7′7″ palace containing over 2000 miniatures', it was created in the late 1920s and early 1930s by Moore in collaboration with other film industry professionals.[1] This extravagant and costly work was displayed at department stores in the 1930s in order to raise money for charities, and is now housed in the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.[2] Clearly evident are both the expense and expertise involved in the creation of the doll's house, built as a work of fantastic architecture to house such marvels as tiny murals of scenes drawn from fairytales and adventure stories, miniature books 'written' by luminaries such as Anita Loos and Daphne du Maurier, and model furniture bejewelled with gems.

Hastie's examination of the cultural and theoretical implications of The Fairy Castle, however, reveals it as more than just an expensive curio. It is a site in which fantasies of transformative stardom intersect with spaces of material wonder, offering an experiential dwelling within fantasy that is potentially akin to watching a film. It is also a site that merges the public and the private, offering a metaphor for stardom itself. Its relation to cinema culture is further evoked through its extravagant depiction of fantastic worlds and objects. It is less an escape from the material and factual evidence of history than an example of how the past – in this case 1920s Hollywood – can be recollected and reconstructed through fantasy. Filled with objects linked to 1920s cinema culture and related to other kinds of collections, such as scrapbooks of publicity material made by film fans, the doll's house emphasizes the discontinuous and fragmentary elements of history; the passage from room to room and from wonder to wonder evokes a sense of history as a collection of objects housed within a framework of fantasy. While the Fairy Castle is a singular example, broader issues of collecting, constructing and viewing history are imbricated in its fantastic architecture.

While the Fairy Castle and related forms of collecting make up the focus of the first chapter, the second chapter, on the 'historian', emphasizes a narrative form of writing film history. Describing how the prolific and important filmmaker Alice Guy-Blaché's place in the history of silent film has been a subject of scholarly interest, Hastie turns to examine her memoirs, which offer Guy-Blaché's own perspective on her role in early cinema. Rather than employing this history as a straightforward account, however, Hastie focuses on its tropes and implications in terms of history writing's representation of women. In particular, tensions between 'a private and public history, as well as the filmmaker's personal and professional status (in other words, her life and her work)' (p. 82) are brought to the fore. Guy-Blaché's writing is situated in the context of other autobiographical writing, including works

1 The Origin of the Fairy Castle. URL: http://www.msichicago.org/exhibit/fairy_castle/history1.htm [accessed 10 September 2007].

2 URL: http://www.msichicago.org/exhibit/fairy_castle [accessed10 September 2007]. This site offers detailed maps and plentiful images of the Castle's various rooms, along with excerpts from Colleen Moore's guide.

by Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish and Gloria Swanson. This allows Hastie the opportunity to examine what the study of memoirs and autobiographies in general might offer the film historian. Rather than attempting to rewrite large-scale film histories through the evidence of these memoirs and autobiographies, Hastie offers a model for interpretive and theoretical approaches to such writing, focusing on the relation of life writing to female authorship and the ways in which the place of women in film history has been constructed and reconstructed.

Turning to an analysis of the film star Louise Brooks in the third chapter, Hastie illustrates how essays written by Brooks helped shape the discourse surrounding her career, her image and her iconic character Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (G.W. Pabst, 1929). This analysis also traces the authorship of Brooks in other contexts, including photographs of herself, an interview with Richard Leacock and her own commentaries written in the margins of books on film. The material is indicative of the diverse forms that historical writing takes throughout Hastie's book. The implications of this material on a range of issues pertaining to Brooks and the representation of women in cinema – from scholarly perspectives to popular histories – effectively demonstrate the productive results of attending to an expanded archive of film history and modes of history writing.

As a critic and commentator, Brooks not only offered insight into her own place in film history but also into broader aspects of cinema culture, the film industry and film theory. To take just one example, Hastie describes how Brooks joined the debates arising out of auteurism. In a letter to Andrew Sarris, Brooks called for an *acteur* theory to offset the auteur theory. If Brooks is, in some respects, an author of her own image through her commentaries, she is also certainly an author of complex and multifaceted performances. Like many stars in both the silent era and later, Brooks's elaboration of particular character types and personas, and the details of gesture, interaction, movement and expression in her performances, create a multifaceted model of authorship. Pursuing the implications of this falls outside of Hastie's purview, which focuses less on specific films and performances and more on other kinds of expression. Nevertheless, Brooks's call for a renewed attention to performance, particularly at a time in which authorship was starting to be accepted as the domain of the director, offers a valuable perspective on the multiple levels of authorship available for interpretation by the historian and critic.

The final chapter on the 'expert' does work, in some respects, to draw in notions of authorship and performance. But Hastie pursues a more theoretical route, examining how the voice of celebrity expertise found in 'how-to' manuals, ranging from books on financial advice to cookbooks, has offered a way to understand, appreciate and hold on to film personalities. Such works can also be seen as offering models for knowledge, action, performance and fantasy. The broader scope of this chapter, which extends beyond the subject of silent-era film, offers an

extension of the concerns that run throughout the book: an expanded corpus of historical material, an examination of the theoretical implications of different works of cinema culture and a renewed perspective on female authorship.

The kind of historical method that emerges from this study is not one that is concerned with examining a particular problematic or with offering a hermeneutics of suspicion; instead, it is an approach that is eager to explore the often fragmentary quality of cultural and cinematic history. This is a productive model for further study – and it is one of Hastie's clearly stated aims to offer a work that leads to further paths of investigation. The intersections of cinema with gender, modernity, ethnicity, politics, social change and fantasy continue to be rich areas of study – and early cinema offers a particularly robust and multifaceted historical period through which to trace these and other sites of society and culture.[3] Hastie's book is a substantial contribution to this study, both in the material it chooses to examine and in its elaboration of an expanded field of historical material. Moreover, *Cupboards of Curiosity* also points to an expansion of what might be examined with students in the teaching of these subjects – I look forward to hearing what they make of Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle.

3 See, for example: Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London: Routledge, 2001); Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds), *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Antonia Lant with Ingrid Periz (eds), *Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema* (London: Verso, 2006).

Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*. Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 278 pp.

TINA WASSERMAN

According to the film scholar and filmmaker Jeffrey Skoller, within the larger field of filmic representation today, it is towards contemporary avant-garde and experimental film that one must look to find the most innovative and complex investigations of history. In particular, Skoller identifies a 'subgenre within contemporary avant-garde and experimental filmmaking that has taken up the problem of historical representation', and contrasts this body of films with conventional consumer-based fictional and sociologically-based documentary cinema in which history is often represented through narratives of redemption and closure (p. xvi) Identifying this group of films as a postmodern avant garde and noting its emergence within the latter part of the twentieth century, Skoller addresses the films' continuation of 'the formal and materialist explorations that were hallmarks of the modernist avant-garde movements' (p. xxv) while additionally demonstrating 'their connections to contemporary intellectual thought which reflect the epistemological shifts in historiography during the last half of [the twentieth] century' (p. xiv). Thus the earlier avant garde's attention to elements such as the film fragment or experimentation with chronology is appropriately embedded within the practice of this later avant garde, now concerned with the representation of history but nonetheless aware that 'the destabilizing of naturalized narrative forms is a hallmark of postmodernist thought' (p. xxv). Skoller's hope is to uncover and critique this nexus of experimental form and historical content, and, moreover, to counter the widely held position that avant-garde films are generally constructed solely around formal concerns.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn011

Yet for this postmodern avant garde, the very inclusion of history, indeed the energy devoted to 'the problem of how to think the past and how to represent it' (p. xxv), profoundly marks its difference from the earlier avant garde. Thus the utopian and progressive energies of the earlier twentieth-century avant garde have transformed into the elegaic, deconstructive tendencies of the later twentieth-century avant garde. To address this temporal shift, Skoller turns to arguments of such theorists as Giorgio Agamben, Jean-François Lyotard and Hayden White. Each of these scholars has argued that such shifts have, in part, been inaugurated by events surrounding World War II – more specifically, that the war engendered 'a geopolitical, philosophical and aesthetic rupture in the narratives of the progressive European universalist Enlightenment project' (p. xxxiii). Skoller – following Lyotard and Agamben – reminds us that no event of World War II is more paradigmatic of this rupture than the Holocaust: 'The sign of Auschwitz continues to haunt the intellectual worlds of Europe and America as a *post*modern condition' (p. xxxiv). The overwhelming, unresolved nature of these events means that history continues to act upon the present as 'a spectral force' (p. xvi). Haunted by events impossible to narrate – indeed deeply suspicious of any sense of narrative coherence at all –an informed postmodern avant garde must critically address the consequences of history.

To construct his argument, Skoller primarily relies on Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory, whereby fragments of the past are vividly revived with meanings from the present, and Gilles Deleuze's formulation of the coexistence of differing temporalities in his theory of the cinematic time-image. But he also enlists other theories of temporality and history – such as Henri Bergson's concept of duration and Sigmund Freud's theories of mourning and the uncanny – to build his argument that the task of the postmodern avant-garde filmmaker has been to sift through the rubble and signs of history to build works of mourning, brooding and allegory.

Skoller divides the films in his study through several lines of theoretical inquiry. His first chapter, 'Shards', is devoted to films that use archival imagery to examine cinema's own fragments and relics but that also consider the very figuration of history that cinema has produced. The formal diversity of his chosen work demonstrates the breadth of his analysis. On the one hand, in *Eureka* (1974) Ernie Gehr evokes a minimalist aesthetic by reworking found archival images of an early twentieth-century San Francisco street. On the other hand, in *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies under America* (1991) Craig Baldwin uses archival newsreel and documentary footage to address the excess of images generated by decades of media culture and freely mixes fact, fiction, fantasy, conspiracy and paranoia to create a darkly ironic portrait of US foreign policy. Though very different, both films, Skoller theorizes, do the work of 'allegorizing . . . cinema's mechanical memory' (p. 37).

Issues around the representation of the Holocaust and its aftermath are central to Skoller's thesis, thus a central focus of two chapters, 'Shadows' and 'Specters', concerns the Jewish diaspora and the trauma of the Holocaust. Fundamental to the theoretical and conceptual organization of these chapters is work that challenges notions of coherence and chronology offered by traditional historical narratives and that examines the representational impasses brought on by events too horrible to describe. Thus, for example, Eleanor Antin plays with history by conjuring up the lost art of Yiddish cinema and the lost world of the Jewish *shtetl* in her film *The Man without a World* (1991), while Abraham Ravett confronts the damage of the Holocaust as he documents, over a period of years, his mother's inability to recount fully her experience of the Auschwitz 'death march' in his film *The March* (1999).

Skoller connects the rupture of World War II to 'other prewar and postwar histories' (p. xxv). He therefore turns away from the Holocaust for one film in his chapter 'Specters' to address the legacy of African-American slavery as it is suggested in Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep* (1977). Although this is a dramatic film and it diverges from his 'criteria for materialist avant-garde film practices' (p. 120), it is an important inclusion and certainly attests to the way in which the traumatic past of slavery continues to spectrally but corrosively thread itself through generations. However, although it was made three decades ago, Skoller only minimally historicizes this film and he mistakenly refers to it several times as depicting a contemporary and present-day struggle. In fact this film depicts the past of a continuously evolving struggle and it seems odd that a book devoted to the representation of history would fail to recognize that South Central Los Angeles circa 1977 is by no means a contemporary setting and that it has changed in complex ways that demand critical and historical contextualization.

In the chapter 'Obsessive returns', Skoller does, however, properly contextualize another film from a distance of three decades, one that also depicts a past and continually evolving struggle. Indeed the very topic of Patricio Guzmán's film *Chile, the Obstinate Memory* (1997) is precisely such a historical contextualization viewed through the distance of time. In this film, Guzmán explores the aftermath of the decades following the Allende coup by revisiting an earlier film he made of the coup, *The Battle of Chile* (1975-79) during his physical return to Chile after years of exile. In detailing Guzmán's return – to both the older film and to the site of its events – Skoller is able to build a more successful argument about history, trauma and complex temporalities.

While the utopian energy of the earlier avant garde seems to have evaporated under the weight of history, Skoller's study does shed light on continuing utopian impulses within this contemporary avant garde. Primarily, this is achieved via a kind of 'backward glance' – for maker and viewer – generating new and open ways of understanding history

and the construction of meaning. Yet Skoller also explores work that resuscitates history to imagine what might have been or what still might be possible. This is evident in his chapter 'Virtualities', in which he presents such films as James Benning's *Utopia* (1998) and Abigail Child's *B/Side* (1996) which depict concrete images and sounds from several histories but simultaneously imagine and point to other tangential and possible outcomes, histories and worlds. In this way, Skoller presents to us the ways that history can be imagined as a message for an elusive but still hoped-for promise of the future.

Sylvia Harvey (ed.), *Trading Culture: Global Traffic and Local Culture in Film and Television*. Southampton: John Libbey, 2006, 236 pp.

PAUL RIXON

This work, edited by Sylvia Harvey, is made up of seventeen papers from the Trading Culture conference held in 2002. The book is divided into three sections, followed by an afterword. The result is an eclectic mix of arguments, which, as I shall explore below, is both its strength and its weakness. A strength in terms of the array of different positions and ideas explored, from Des Freeman's overview of the ins and outs of the negotiations over the trade in services at the World Trade Organization, to Andrew Higson's work on the exportation of British heritage films, such *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996) and *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981). And there is, of course, a strong thread of common interest running throughout the book, with each of these chapters (or papers) exploring an aspect of trading culture, often in very different ways. However, a weaker aspect of this type of work, indeed of any collection of conference papers, is an occasionally unbalanced feel. While some papers seem to be offering policy–regulatory explorations, others take a more cultural focus, looking at the selling of national culture or at the development of a particular cultural form. These are approaches that do not always sit that easily together. Faced, in some chapters, with a march of acronyms of international organizations across the page, some might seek solace in the filmic analysis that seems to pop up more in the latter part of this work. However, as the papers are generally short, if the going gets hard one can at least anticipate the imminent arrival of something more interesting. Overall, I found the mix and blend of papers provided an interesting and well-rounded overview of the complex debates in this area.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn012

The first section, focusing on 'Re-thinking the trade in culture', consists of four chapters, each contributing to a discussion about what is meant by the idea of trading in cultural services and commodities. In his essay, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith argues that we should not conflate the ideas of 'cultural' goods and services with lived culture; we can trade in cultural commodities but it does not mean that we have exchanged or traded in culture as such. Indeed, increasingly trade is more in intellectual rights than in commodities. Des Freeman looks at the shenanigans that have gone on in the negotiations over opening up (or not) the trade in services, a trade which actually includes cultural commodities and services. Simon Blanchard moves away from these more general discussions to look at how New Labour tried to get British television to focus on an international market, specifically to start to produce the 'right sort' of programme to be traded abroad. This despite the fact that, according to the industry itself, British television has actually been very successful. Finally. Sylvia Harvey explores how, since the 1920s, British cultural policy has helped represent local culture on radio and television, a role now under pressure as the sector becomes more commercialized and international.

In the second section, 'National industries, global currents', six papers explore different global tendencies in relation to specific national contexts. They range from Dima Dabbous-Sensenig's work on Lebanon and the way it is coping with opening up, but still trying to protect, its media market, to Lúcia Nagib's work on Brazilian films and the importance of scripts in attracting financial support. Other contexts explored in this section include Scottish films as an example of national exchange (Duncan Petrie), the development of copycat TV in Asia and the Pacific (Albert Moran and Michael Keane), global trends in India's media industry (Manjunath Pendakur) and the development of Hispanic television in America (John Sinclair). Each offers an interesting, through brief, introduction to very specific discussions relating to particular global–national situations.

The focus of the third and final section, 'National cultures in a transatlantic context', is on various 'economic and culture transactions conducted "across" the North Atlantic' (p. 145). Of the five papers in this section, four focus on different cultural interactions between Britain and the USA. Thus Sarah Street looks at how the special relationship found itself being explored and represented within film before and after World War II; Tom Ryall looks at the relationship of US investment to British film; Steve Neale, in a similar vein, explores the involvement of the USA in British costume dramas in the postwar era; and, in the last of these British–American focused chapters, Andrew Higson investigates the way that, since the 1980s, previously niche-market British heritage movies have been invested in by US majors seeking more diverse material to serve an increasingly fragmented global audience. The last chapter of this section, with no British connection, is by Tino Balio, who examines how, after the market success of *Et Dieu créa la femme*/*And*

God Created Women (Roger Vadim, 1957), the Hollywood majors began to take over the US art market.

While there is no overall conclusion, in the 'Afterword' Sylvia Harvey and Carole Tongue try to relate some of the issues raised throughout this book in relation UNESCO's new convention. This suggests that, while accepting the increasing end of barriers to trade, the convention does afford nations some protection for the cultural sector, as an area of central importance in relation to national diversity, identity and, by extension, human rights. This is an interesting compilation of papers, which, while eclectic in nature, provides a good introduction to the debates around the trade in Culture. While, on one hand, the papers are short, necessarily providing a brief overview of their area, it does mean one is never bored; a new subject will soon come along. As with all conference papers, some seem to fit their brief more than others, but on balance this is an interesting and informative read.

John Phillips, *Transgender on Screen.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006, 224 pp.

JAY STEWART

Transgender on Screen is an eclectic investigation of gender through representations of (and ambivalent responses to) crossdressing, transgenderism and transsexuality in mainstream film. Phillips argues that little has been published that puts transgender at its heart, and thus 'This book is designed to fill in the gap' (p. 1). As he negotiates specific films which feature trans[1] subjectivities and themes from within the genres of comedy, horror and others, Phillips offers some introduction to various theoretical frameworks through which to read these films and characters. He posits trans as an interdisciplinary subject matter, but bases his own readings predominantly on the use of psychoanalysis.

This book may be significant for media studies or film studies students for whom psychoanalytic tools are useful and whose interest in trans studies and gender politics is growing. Similarly, those involved in gender studies, queer theory and feminism may benefit from the psychoanalytic methodologies employed when reading representations of trans. As an activist from within the trans community, however, my reading of the book is as one whose interests lie in the valorization (or not, as the case may be) of trans subjectivities specifically. It is perhaps necessary to state that my response may not be the same as other readers, but it raises concerns over some of the understandings of trans people that Phillips offers in relation to the films that he critiques. He engages us with psychoanalytical modes such as Lacan's notion of the 'Real' and the 'imaginary', the 'symbolic realms' and the 'father's law', as well as Freud's notion of 'castration anxiety', each of which offers understandings of how gendered roles are psychically constructed in the world and more specifically from within the family. He understands these

1 'Trans' is an umbrella term that identifies the spectrum of those who feel that their assigned sex at birth does not match, or sit easily with, their sense of self. It encompasses transsexuals, transgendered people and crossdressers, and anyone who challenges gender norms. It is a generic term used both in trans identities discourse and in an academic context.

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn013

types of analysis to be 'essential tools in the exploration of a powerful textual unconscious' (p. 5). Phillips also outlines the work of gender studies and queer theorists as an important backdrop when engaging with trans. He breaks down the multiplicity of identities within trans, such as drag queens, female impersonators and transsexuals, informatively, relying heavily on Marjorie Garber. Throughout his introduction he offers short, concise and compelling summaries of understandings of sex, gender and sexuality in relation to the trans body. This demonstrates how 'trans' hosts multiple and diverse meanings as well as subjectivities, which ideologically might seek to explode binaries. Phillips cites Garber to this effect:

> Transvestitism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself.[2] (p. 3)

He splits his dozen 'mass audience' films into three genres – comedy, thriller and mixed genre.

> Comedies almost exclusively represent cross-dressers, exploring temporary transformations of gender in a largely playful manner, while thrillers deal with the frightening prospects of a more serious threat to gender identity. The mixed genre films, as this category title suggests, contain examples of both. (p. 5)

Interestingly, the fourth area of this book examines the trans subject from within the porn film industry. Phillips's aim is to 'reposition and redefine sexual desire against sexual fascination with transgender' (p. 2). This seems an appendage to the book and is slightly out of kilter with the other film discourses presented. Nonetheless, as Phillips is concerned with 'mass audience' films, he does show how trans as sexual object of desire – specifically in the figure of the 'she male' – is a highly consumed phenomenon.

The comedies he considers are *Some Like it Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959), *Tootsie* (Sydney Pollack, 1982), *Mrs Doubtfire* (Chris Columbus, 1993) and *Victor/Victoria* (Blake Edwards, 1982). These films engage ideas of gender and sexual politics, social and family roles and the working world. Phillips discusses how crossdressing is positioned in the films as a functional pursuit that will achieve a specific aim, for example paid work. These films (and hence this section of the book itself) do not address sufficiently the subjectivities or the phenomenon of crossdressing, as the protagonists do not *identify* as trans. In fact, as the crossdressing plot reveals itself, the very negation of *being* a crossdresser is strongly reinforced. For example, when the boy finds Mrs Doubtfire standing up to urinate, he runs away to 'call the cops', identifying *being* trans as a criminal act; he also gets confused over how to name her – 'he's a she . . . I mean, she's a he'. When finally it is revealed that Mrs Doubtfire is the father of the boy, and the son asks 'You don't really like wearing that stuff do you dad?', the reply, 'No this is not a way of life, it's

2 Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 17.

just a job . . . it's the only way I could see you guys every day', justifies the extreme act of crossdressing with a conservative and affective motive such as being a *present* father. A trans plot features in each of the comedy films only as a pragmatic solution to a problem, while the narrative consequence is ultimately to reinstate heteronormativity, such as affirming the role of the father in *Mrs Doubtfire*, heterosexuality in *Victor/Victoria* and full male access to the working world in *Some Like it Hot* and *Tootsie*. Thus,

> Transvestitism is represented as a means to an end, a temporary transgression which never really threatens the status quo. (p. 69)

By engaging in these particular trans representations, the analysis does not necessarily offer any insight into the lifestyles, identities and subjectivities of trans at all. It is only the trope of the trans body, the work which *occupying the opposite sex* does, that is used to employ a discursive and theatrical exploration of gender. Despite this limitation, Phillips's analysis does retain some political clout. For example, in *Tootsie* the narrative engages with the political backdrop of women in the workplace, sexual discrimination and objectification. *Tootsie* brilliantly conveys an exercise in 'being' or 'playing' the *opposite sex* – a repositioning in the world, which trans politically, ideologically and in 'real' terms does engage with.

Peformability – the extent to which one can perform – is another interesting idea discussed by Phillips. As performing is revealed through a triple staging in *Tootsie* – Hoffman plays Michael, Michael plays Dorothy and Dorothy plays a character in a soap opera – we are shown how being a woman is indeed 'performable'. However, Judith Butler's ideas of performativity or gender as performance are misrepresented by Phillips, as he offers a distinction between the 'real' world and the performance space in a way that Butler does not.

> Gender, it is implied, can be enacted, as Butler has claimed, but not assumed in any permanent or real sense and this is the weakness of Butler's use of 'performability' metaphor, for performance is always necessarily an illusion that is destined to vanish when the curtain comes down. (p. 65).

In fact, Butler's work on drag exemplifies how the 'real world' *is* performative. Her argument is not that a gender performance will vanish when the curtain comes down, and the person then reveals a truer or more real self away from or different to the 'woman' or 'man' performed through the drag act. Rather, what vanishes are the very mechanics that construct the gendered performances themselves. We learn from Butler that it is through repetition that a naturalized effect of 'woman' is produced, which congeals over time.

> If the 'I' is the effect of a certain repetition, one which produces the semblance of a continuity or coherence, then there is no 'I' that

precedes the gender that it is said to perform; the repetition and the failure to repeat, produce a string of performances that constitute and contest the coherence of that 'I'.[3]

3 Judith Butler *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 36.

Phillips uses the various scenes in *Tootsie* in order to play out the constitution of gender as being either essentialist, fixed and determined by a binary opposition or as constructed and a challenge to the fixity of binary categorization. As Phillips observes, the film attempts to explore a more innate femaleness, or a non-surface idea of woman-ness, when we see Michael become a woman (or womanly), caring about other people and fussing about what Dorothy should wear. In Phillips's deconstruction of representations we vacillate between the surface and non-surface expressions of gender as well as engage in the contradictory and wrangling politics of gender and queer projects. Although we see Michael taking on more empathetic qualities as he moves into a woman-centric position, and this transformation takes place beyond the surface, to equate 'caring' with 'womanliness' is nevertheless problematic. Equally, his constant railing against being called 'toots' emphasizes the ways in which power is played out in the workplace. Yet whilst the film attempts to address sexism, it does seem to reinforce a sense of revulsion about homosexuality. That the film portrays womanliness through stereotypical characteristics (such as worrying about what to wear), and that it takes a man to challenge sexism, is also politically problematic.

As *Victor/Victoria* is a film about drag, this is related to a further exploration of Butler's theories of gender performance. Julie Andrews plays a woman who plays an effeminate gay man who performs drag (again for economic and functional reasons). Phillips usefully demonstrates how sexuality, desire and attraction play out in terms of these trans performances – when a woman playing a gay man who performs drag is the object of a straight male gaze, the identity of that gaze is also que(e)ried. In the initial playing out of these two characters and their desire, the film offers ideas of non-normative sexual encounters and fantasises, yet as the unveiling takes place, heteronormativity is reasserted, allowing a heterosexual, and therefore valididated, love to ensue.

The 'psycho trans' chapter of the book works through the concepts of castration anxiety and the phallic mother, as well as the fears and taboos associated with incest, examining *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980), *Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) and *Cherry Falls* (Geoffrey Wright, 2000). The horror genre is a familiar place to site monsters, psychotics and deviants, and picturing the 'gender disturbed', such as transsexuals, articulates narratives which serve to enforce the law of the father, place the mother as maternal and work to preserve the nuclear family to ensure a sane and safe citizenship. Using the works of Judith Halberstam, Phillips offers an effective discussion of the relationship between trans and the skin or surface of the body. However, Phillips's attempts to differentiate

between transvestitism and transsexualism by positing that discourses of the transvestite concentrate on gender as surface and that the transsexual is conversely innately and/or psychically created. Although there are distinct differences of opinion in these debates, it is naive to split transsexualism and transvestism so simplistically into these two camps. By so doing, Phillips suggests that transvestites 'play' with gender through presentation and expression, but that transsexuals' gender identity comes from *feeling* themselves *to be* 'male' or 'female'.

This book is not about trans people or about *being* trans, although there is some exploration of films in which trans subjectivities are interestingly dealt with, such as *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberley Peirce, 1999), *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992) and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliot, 1994). Trans people buying this book may be disappointed, as Phillips's knowledge of trans lives, communities and politics is limited. If Phillips hopes to open up a space for trans debates, he undermines this by reverting to over-simplistic thinking about trans identities. Rather than query, as trans does, the very category of *being* 'woman' or 'man', Phillips gives the authority of this *being* to the very biological frameworks which trans fights against or, at the very least, unsettles. For example, when he posits that the 'true' and 'real' sex of Dil from *The Crying Game* and Brandon Teena from *Boys Don't Cry* is male and female respectively, he understands this to be the case because he has privileged the significance of their genitalia above all else. He states:

> Lana's repression of the evidence that Brandon *is a woman* may be interpreted in terms of a preference to maintain a pleasurable distance from *reality*. . . . Lana's disavowal of Brandon's *true sex* may be rooted in her own unconscious attraction to the feminine, as suggested by her fondness of 'cow' images. (p. 145, my italics)

Phillips dangerously (re)places the protagonist Brandon Teena as 'woman', when perhaps this is the very category of identity that he wishes to escape. Phillips also suggests that Brandon's imagination goes 'too far', and categorizes him as a 'Billy Liar' figure (p. 145) because Brandon 'convince(s) himself as well as those around him that his imagination is a version of reality' (p. 145). Here, Phillips inadvertently regulates the borders of fantasy and reality, which serves to reinstate the power of the 'real' as biological and supposes that transsexuals are deluded by overstepping that mark. A different view here might be that trans subjectivities and narratives demonstrate that all sexed and gendered identity *goes beyond* genitalia and the assignment of male or female at birth.

Although this is an interesting gathering of thoughts and films concerning trans on screen, it is unfortunate that the book ultimately offers such negative representations, a lack of complexity of thinking and a poor understanding of trans subjectivities.

Thomas Waugh, *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006, 566 pp.

GER ZIELINSKI

The Romance of Transgression constitutes a major contribution to the study of queer and Canadian cinemas. Its author Thomas Waugh has written several award-winning books and articles on film history in the areas of social and political documentary film,[1] Canadian cinema, the representation of lesbian and gay sexuality in film[2] and pre-Stonewall homoerotic photography and drawings.[3] His extensive work within academia is matched by his long-term commitment to progressive social and political causes, including censorship battles, queer scene politics and challenges to funding categories. He has taught film studies since the 1970s at Concordia University in Montreal, where he founded the Minor Programme in Interdisciplinary Studies in Sexuality – the first in Canada, and he has recently undertaken interdisciplinary research and teaching on the AIDS pandemic.

The book is in good company among the recent surge of publications on queer cinemas and offers its own take on the negotiation of nation, national film canon and sexual representation. Apart from the general anthologies on queer cinema,[4] there are several publications with related themes[5] and Waugh contributes to these studies, each of which attempts to negotiate 'queer' in relation to such categories as nation or region, through his own approach to the specificities of queer film in Canada. In particular, he addresses the linguistic and cultural divide between the predominantly French-speaking Quebec cinema and English-speaking film from the rest of Canada (ROC), and Canada's significant interventionist cultural policies and public funding. *The Romance of Transgression* is the fifth book that Waugh has published in the last six

1 His important early anthology *'Show Us Life': Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary* (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1984).

2 *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996); *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

3 *Out/Lines: Underground Gay Graphics from Before Stonewall* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002); with Willie Walker, *Lust Unearthed: Vintage Gay Graphics From the DuBek Collection* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004); edited, with introduction, *Gay Art: a Historic Collection by Felix Lance Falkon* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2006).

4 For example: Ellis Hanson (ed.), *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999), Michele Aaron (ed.), *New Queer Cinema: a Critical Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Harry Benshoff (ed.), *Queer Cinema, the Film Reader* (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2004).

5 Examples include: Alice Kuzniar, *The Queer German Cinema* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Raz Yosuf, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Robin Griffiths. *British Queer Cinema* (British Popular Cinema)

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1093/screen/hjn014

(New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2006); Andrew Grossman, *Queer Asian Cinema: Shadows in the Shade* (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 2000); Lucille Cairns, *Sapphism on Screen: Lesbian Desire in French and Francophone Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

years and marks an impressive *summa* of his extended study in the area. The book is organized into two parts – the first comprising ten episodes or chapters and the second constituting an encyclopedia of short biographies of film- and videomakers along with assessments of associated cultural institutions. It also includes notes, a bibliography and a useful combined index of titles, persons and concepts.

The ten chapters of the first part are arranged loosely in historical order from the Cold War, the sexual revolution and the AIDS crisis to the present, but they also include more thematic chapters, notably on two Canadian cinematic cities, diverse urban/rural rites of passage, the queering of the National Film Board, the curious masculinities of sport and hunting narratives, a studied glance at the country's minor pornographic cinema and a survey of transgender film. Waugh begins Part I with a clarification of his terminology and conceptual framework. As the book's subtitle intimates, key categories are sexualities, nations and cinemas – all under the influence of queering. 'Nation' is decentred and challenged from within, according to the tensions between rival cities and regions, and is rendered plural with respect to the First Nations (indigenous peoples), French-speaking Québec, the rest of Canada (outside of Québec) and Eastern versus Western provinces, all of which are defined against the economic and political Central Canada. 'Cinema' also becomes plural here, as is more common in the French, adding increased differentiation to the concept of national cinema. Moreover, Waugh extends cinema to include video and similar digital moving pictures; effectively, therefore, sexuality, nation and cinema are rendered differentiated and queered.

Chapter four is particularly compelling as it rewrites nation in terms of the metropolitan. This is a comparative study of two of the most populous cities in Canada, namely Toronto and Montréal, but also a comparison between the 1960s and 1970s. Waugh's 'fairytale' case studies are the four fascinating films *À tout prendre* (Claude Jutra, Montréal, 1963), *Il était une fois dans l'Est* (André Brassard, Montréal, 1973), *Winter Kept Us Warm* (David Secter, Toronto, 1965) and *Outrageous!* (Richard Benner, Toronto, 1977). Part of the analysis shows us how these films were initially received but also how minority sexualities were represented at the time. The urban sexual cultures in the early films uncover their underground, secretive realms, while those from the post-Stonewall 1970s display the highly organized public visibility of gay bars and clubs in both cities. Waugh's analysis also interrogates the peculiar reception of the films. None of these films is now considered part of the national canon, although each was highly praised by critics at the time of its release. Thus, over time, each film has lost its claim to national status. The case of *Outrageous!* has a special twist, since it was immediately dismissed by the renowned gay activist publication *Body Politic* as regressive stereotyping – specifically, the gay man as fey female impersonator. Feted at Cannes, celebrated by the foreign and a stunned Canadian press, yet rejected by gay community intelligentsia in

Toronto, the film found fleeting national canon recognition. The whole chapter thereby prompts the question of how commensurable the national canon can ever be with the representation of minority sexualities.

Moving from city films to 'the sticks' in chapter five, Waugh addresses a current and lively research area for sexuality studies – non-urban towns and rural regions. He successfully mobilizes Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a heuristic tool to aid his analysis and interpretation, and intermingles examples from the genres of documentary, feature, experimental film and video art. The categories in his taxonomy are telling: the urban story with rural refuge; the queer adult returns to the smalltown or rural home of childhood; stories set completely in the everyday of the non-urban; women's coming-of-age narratives. The regions of the country covered here include the Atlantic provinces, northern Ontario mining towns, Quebec farming villages and the Prairies, among others. Waugh reveals the striking differences between sexual narratives, but especially the gendered patterns of coming out and coming of age across several decades.

Chapter nine is dedicated to the representation of AIDS in film and video, primarily by Toronto-based John Greyson, Richard Fung and Mike Hoolboom. Waugh traces their work from the beginning of the pandemic in the early 1980s and the accompanying activism to the present. All three artists had witnessed the emergence of AIDS and HIV from the early days, and found themselves compelled personally and politically to respond with highly sophisticated work that has developed in form from the most immediate video to opera.[6] This chapter would serve as an excellent survey of film and video in Canada on AIDS and the crisis.

In the second part of the book Waugh dedicates nearly two-hundred pages to his portrait gallery of 'movers and shakers' that includes not only brief biographical notes on the filmmakers but also critical appraisals of their institutional support. In Waugh's own words, this was a 'perhaps overambitious' project that can 'never [be] terminable, a work in progress' (p. 20). Yet not only does it pull together some almost forgotten filmmakers, it also serves as a fascinating snapshot for those currently making film and video, identifying members of various distinct or overlapping scenes. Waugh's sense of queer extends beyond the increasingly common umbrella term for LGBTTI,[7] and this is demonstrated by his inclusion of various notable heterosexual directors, such as Guy Maddin, whose work performs very queerly, Denys Arcand, who from time to time plays a gay character in his films, and also Atom Egoyan, who customarily warps the normative with pleasure. A few of the gems in this section are the touching eulogy to NFB animator Norman McLaren and his longtime lover and producer Guy Glover, feminist documentarists Janis Cole and Holly Dale, the late director Claude Jutra, *vidéaste* Anne Golden, and Montréal's Image + Nation lesbian and gay film festival.

6 See film version of opera *Fig Trees* (John Greyson, Canada, 2003).

7 Short for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex.'

While I am not prone to quibbling over details that do not affect the overall argument, I should point out a few mistakes that could be easily corrected in a later edition, namely that Pat Mills has never been a she (p. 470), Evgeny Zborovsky gave up filmmaking several years ago to study the classics and law (p. 539), and G.B. Jones did not appear in *Super* $8\frac{1}{2}$ (Bruce LaBruce, Canada, 1994), which instead featured a parodic character meant to resemble Jones, as before the film was made she and LaBruce had a complicated falling out (p. 437). These changes highlight the challenges of creating such a snapshot of living filmmakers, whose city of residence, teaching affiliation, commitment to filmmaking, subtle crucial transitions in scenes, age shyness,[8] and even sexual preference may change without much notice or documentation outside of the scene. Nevertheless, as Waugh acknowledges, this part is by its nature 'a work in progress' and its benefits strongly outweigh any small shortcomings.

Romance should provide an excellent, essential resource to scholars and students of queer or Canadian cinemas. To the film critic and programmer it offers the highly useful encyclopaedia of filmmakers, both historic and current, and their institutions, from funding agencies to film festivals. The reader need not be either queer or a Canadianist, but should have some interest in sexual representation and that curious northern country. Waugh's warm witty prose should seduce expert and novice alike to venture forth to see at least some of the films and videos that he brings to life in these pages.

8 Canadian comedian Scott Thompson writes, 'I was a year older than Bruce, although if you ask him it was more like five. I don't mind when my friends lie about their age. I figure it brings me down in years too.' Doubtless this applies to other age-sensitive queers. Scott Thompson, 'Introduction', in Bruce LaBruce, *Bruce LaBruce: the Reluctant Pornographer* (Toronto: Gutter Press, 1997), p. 7.

Contributors

Dudley Andrew is the R. Selden Rose Professor of Film and Comparative Literature at Yale University. Biographer of André Bazin, he has recently provided a 'Foreword' to each volume of Bazin's reissued *What is Cinema?*

James Bennett is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at London Metropolitan University. He is coeditor (with Tom Brown) of *Film and Television After DVD* (2008) and author of a number of articles on digital, interactive television in the UK.

William Boddy is Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Baruch College and at the Graduate Center, both of the City University of New York. He is author of *Fifties Television: the Industry and Its Critics* (1990) and *New Media and Popular Imagination: Launching Radio, Television, and Digital Media in the United States* (2004).

Mark Glancy is Senior Lecturer in History at Queen Mary, University of London. He is author of *When Hollywood Loved Britain: the Hollywood British Film, 1939-45* (1999), *The 39 Steps: a British Film Guide* (2003) and coeditor of *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (2007). His next book will be on Hollywood and the Americanization of Britain, from the 1920s to the present.

Christine Gledhill is Professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Sunderland, author of *Reframing British Cinema 1918-1928: Between Restraint and Passion* (2004), editor of such books as *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (1987) and coeditor (with Gillian Swanson) of *Nationalising Femininity* (1996) and (with Linda Williams) of *Reinventing Film Studies* (2000).

Su Holmes is Reader in Television at the University of East Anglia. She is author of *British TV and Film Culture in the 1950s* (2005), *Entertaining TV: the BBC and Popular Programme Culture in the 1950s* (2008) and *The Quiz Show* (2008). She is also coeditor of *Understanding Reality TV* (2004), *Framing Celebrity* (2006) and *Stardom and Celebrity: a Reader* (2007).

Seung-hoon Jeong is a doctoral candidate in Film Studies and Comparative Literature at Yale University. He is a winner of the 2007 Domitor Prize.

Brett Mills is Lecturer in Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia, and Associate Tutor for the Open University. He is author of *Television Sitcom* (2005) and (with David Barlow) of *Reading Media Theory* (forthcoming). He is Associate Editor of Palgrave Macmillan's Adaptation Series, and recently carried out an AHRC-funded study on the British terrestrial television comedy industry, Funny Business.

Paul Rixon is Principal Lecturer in Media and Culture at Roehampton University. He has published in a number of areas, including the rise of the information city and new media coverage on the Iraqi war, and has recently published a book about US television on British screens.

Martin Shingler is Senior Lecturer in Radio and Film Studies at the University of Sunderland, coauthor (with John Mercer) of *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility* (2004), and author of 'Interpreting *All About Eve:* a study in historical reception', in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds), *Identifying*

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.

Hollywood's Audiences (2001); 'Bette Davis: malevolence in motion', in Alan Lovell and Peter Kramer (eds), *Screen Acting* (1999); and 'Masquerade or drag: Bette Davis and the ambiguities of gender', in *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 3 (1995).

Ed Sikov has taught film courses at Colorado College and Haverford College and is author of six books, most recently *Dark Victory: the Life of Bette Davis* (2007). He is currently writing an introductory film studies textbook for Columbia University Press.

Jay Stewart is a PhD student in the Visual Cultures Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His research centres upon the differently constituted knowledges of transsexualities. He is a documentary maker, a facilitator on the Sci:dentity Project, a youth programme funded by the Wellcome Trust, and founder of Gendered Intelligence.

Tina Wasserman is a faculty member in the Visual and Critical Studies Department at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/Tufts University.

Ger Zielinski is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University, Montréal. He has published in such journals as *Parachute: revue d'art contemporain*, *Lola*, *C Magazine*, *European Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, as well as in the *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice* (SAGE).

Notes to Contributors

Papers submitted to **Screen** should be double spaced on good quality A4 or equivalent size paper, with wide margins, and sent to: The Editors, **Screen**, Gilmorehill Centre, Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland. Typescripts will not be sent back to authors unless return postage is enclosed. An electronic copy should also be submitted to screen@arts.gla.ac.uk. Authors should ensure that papers submitted are correct in style and language and that the print is dark enough to photocopy. Author's name should be printed on title page only.

Authors should include with submitted material a brief biographical note, including institutional affiliation, and a 250-word abstract.

Submission of a manuscript is taken by the Editors to imply that the paper represents original work not previously published and not under consideration for publication, elsewhere; and if accepted for publication that it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the Editors and Publisher. It is also assumed that the author will have obtained the necessary permissions to include in the paper copyright material such as illustrations, extended quotations, etc. Authors who have material published in **Screen** will receive one free copy of the journal issue and, if requested, 25 offprints of their contribution. Republication in an anthology or collection of an author's own work is freely permissible, with due credit to **Screen**. Republication otherwise requires the permission of **Screen**, the publisher and the author.

Photographs and other illustrative material submitted with the typescript should be clearly labelled with the author's name and, if appropriate, with figure number and caption. Tables should be submitted separately from written text, with a note indicating desired position in text.

Notes and references, which should be kept to a minimum, should be on an automatic numbering system where possible, and appear at the end of the article, not at the foot of individual pages.

Style for citations of *written sources* is as follows:

1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton. Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan, 1982).

2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.

3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

References to *films* in both notes and main text should include full title with initial capitalisation according to accepted style of the language concerned. Titles should be italicised, and in the case of non-English language films original release title should precede US and/or British release title, followed by director and release date in round brackets:

A bout de souffle/Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Where such information is relevant to the argument and does not appear elsewhere in the text, details of production company and/or country of origin may also be included:

The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, US, 1945)

References to *television programmes* should be dated from the year of first transmission, and, in the case of long-running serials, the duration of the run should be indicated. Details of production company, transmitting channel, country, may be supplied where they are relevant to the argument:

Coronation Street (Granada, 1961–)

Where writers or producers are credited their role should be indicated:

Where the Difference Begins (w. David Mercer, BBC, 1961)

Further details on www.screen.arts.gla.ac.uk

© The Author 2008. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Screen. All rights reserved.

Coming soon…

Volume 49, number 2

WILLIAM BODDY: A century of electronic cinema

TOM BROWN: Spectacle/gender/history: the case of *Gone with the Wind*

DOUGLAS CUNNINGHAM: It's all there, it's no dream: *Vertigo* and the redemptive pleasures of the cinephilic pilgrimage

PETER STANFIELD: Lawrence Alloway's pop art film criticism and its place in British film studies

From previous issues

Volume 48, number 4

PAUL BEGIN: Entomology as anthropology in the films of Luis Buñuel

ISABEL BALSEIRO: Exile and longing in Abderrahmane Sissako's *La Vie sur terre*

J.P. TELOTTE: Winsor McCay's warped spaces

ANTHONY ENNS: The politics of *Ostalgie*: post-socialist nostalgia in recent German film

Volume 48, number 3

CHRIS CAGLE: Two modes of prestige film • Winner of the *Screen* Award 2006/07

MAX CAVITCH: Sex after death: François Ozon's libidinal invasions

JO EVANS: Sex and the censors: the *femme fatale* in Juan Antonio Bardem's *Muerte de un ciclista*

YURIKO FURUHATA: Returning to actuality: *fûkeiron* and the landscape film